Philosophical Instructions

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Philosophical Instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy

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This text has been compiled for the purpose of introducing the students of the Islamic seminaries in Qom to the rudiments of Islamic philosophy. It is arranged in the form of seventy short lessons that cover the breadth of Islamic philosophy including discussions of the history of philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophical theology. The lectures were originally presented by the author to students and were recorded. The transcripts of the tapes were later revised and edited by the author and published in two volumes.

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Translator's Introduction

Philosophical Instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy is a textbook compiled for the purpose of introducing the students of the Islamic seminaries in Qom to the rudiments of Islamic philosophy. It is arranged in the form of seventy short lessons which cover the breadth of Islamic philosophy, including discussions of the history of philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics and philosophical theology.

The lectures were originally presented by the author to students and taped at the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute in Qom in 1981 and 1982, the transcriptions of the tapes were revised and edited by Prof. Misbah and published in two volumes by the Islamic Propagation Organization in Qom. In the Persian edition, titled Amuzesh-e Falsafeh, first printed in 1985-86, each lesson is followed by a summary and review questions, but the lessons themselves are so concise that we decided to omit these materials from the translation.

The book was not written for an English speaking audience, and for this very reason it serves that audience as a very good introduction to Islamic philosophy as it is seen from within the seminaries of Qom. The author, Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi, is one of the most highly respected clerics in the Shi'i world, and a revered professor of philosophy.

His Philosophical Instructions is a unique work, not only because of its survey of the topics of Islamic philosophy, but because the author self-consciously attempts to defend his considered views from opponents at home and abroad. So, the work is polemical as well as instructional. What is defended is a controversial way of looking at Islamic philosophy as a foundation for religious thought.

Philosophy and the interpretation of the Qur'an, like mysticism, 'irfan, are looked upon with suspicion by many Shi'i clerics who teach Islamic law and jurisprudence, fiqh and usul, although the situation has improved somewhat since the Islamic Revolution due to the fact that Imam Khomeini promoted these areas of learning, and due to the esteem in which 'Allamah Tabataba'i is held, whose works in these areas have become standards.[1]

What are at issue are not so much the methods of philosophy as the doctrines with which it is associated in the Islamic world. Among the scholars of Islam, philosophy is not merely a tradition of thought extending from ancient Greece, winding its way through the Neoplatonists, Muslims, Christians, modern Europeans and leading to the contemporary academic study of philosophy of science, religion, law and politics.

In the Muslim world, philosophy has always been more than a method and set of topics with a history; it has always demanded the acceptance of specific doctrines which have been considered by some to be inconsistent with Islam. The philosophers of Islam, like the sufis and the Shi'ah (and important thinkers often claimed allegiance to all three of these forms of esotericism), proposed non-literal interpretations of various verses of the Qur'an and narrations attributed to the Prophet and his folk (S). The reaction from the literal minded is predictable: charges of heresy, deviation and infidelity.

In the Qur'an, we seem to be presented with the concept of a personal, if not anthropomorphic deity, while the philosophers and sufis claimed that God is existence itself, or the truth of existence, or absolute existence, being. Islam apparently teaches that in the temporal period following death, various physical rewards and punishments are to be encountered.

The philosophers and sufis claimed that the rewards and punishments were somehow simultaneous with our current lives. The resurrection of the body has also been given various mystical and philosophical interpretations which are anathema to the literalists. The literalists are not to be dismissed as stubborn narrow minded people who insist on the authority of the Word of God over the use of human reason.

Christian fundamentalism does not find a precise analogue in Islam. In the quarrel with philosophy, both sides have employed subtle philosophical arguments to defend their positions, at least since the time of Ghazali (d. 1111). The charge of the literalists is often that it is unreasonable to interpret the scriptures

as suggested by the mystics and philosophers, and no matter how much we might like to side with the non-literalists, it must be admitted that philosophers and mystics have often provided interpretations of the texts which are hard to swallow.

In the Shi'i milieu, however, esoteric interpretation of texts is an intrinsic part of orthodoxy, for the Imams ('a) themselves revealed various levels of esoteric knowledge passed down to them from the Prophet (S) along with their status of trusteeship (walayah). This esoteric knowledge pertains to the interpretation of the Qur'an and to doctrine, but it is rarely directly pertinent to the details of ritual law.

For the Shi'i scholars of the law, the fuqaha, whose business is providing clear textual evidence in support of legal judgments as to what actions are obligatory, recommendable, neutral, discouraged or forbidden, it is natural to develop a preference for a natural common sense reading of the texts. So, there is a hermeneutic tension to be found in the Shi'i seminaries.

On the one hand, there is a special sensitivity to the esoteric encouraged by the pronouncements of the Imams ('a), and on the other hand interest in the juristic studies fosters a tendency toward literalism and common sense reasoning. The situation is further complicated if we consider the split among the Shi'i jurists into the Akhbariyyun and Usuliyyun.

With respect to exegesis, there are two fundamental issues dividing these two groups: first, how to distinguish authentic from inauthentic narrations attributed to the Prophet and his folk ('a), and second, how to derive juridical rulings on the basis of the authentic narrations. The Akhbariyyun tended to accept the entire corpus of ahadith or to adjudicate authenticity on the basis of the text of the narrations, while the Usuliyyun sought to derive the authenticity of a report first by estimating the reliability of its chain of transmission and then considering the text itself.

Once the authentic reports have been identified, the Akhbariyyun would let them speak for themselves to answer questions of law, while the Usuliyyun argued that various principles (usul) of jurisprudence must be used in order to provide answers to many legal questions, and in these principles common sense and reason are prominent.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Akhbariyyun had virtually disappeared, and the usuli attitude toward exegesis, favoring common sense and rationalism, has come to dominate not only studies of Islamic law and the principles of jurisprudence, but the Islamic sciences generally. The literalism associated with the study of the law is a moderate literalism that emphasizes the place of reason and common sense.

Philosophical Instructions displays a balance between usuli literalist and esoteric tendencies in the context of a defense of Islamic philosophy. The charge of misinterpreting sacred texts is obviated by the absence of any significant reliance on scripture at all. Reason, as understood from within the scholastic tradition of Shi'i learning, is the sole standard to which appeal is made, and it is recognized that scriptural language is often used in figurative ways so that esoteric interpretation dictated by reason must finally be accepted to reconcile philosophy with religion.

The Islamic philosophy defended is one that derives from the works of Sadr al-Din Shirazi (d. 1641), commonly known as Mulla Sadra and usually referred to in this work by the honorific title, Sadr al-Muta'allihin, the pride of the theosophists. Sadr al-Muta'allihin was himself a sythesizer who built a system called Hikmah al-Muta'aliyyah (transcendent theosophy) which includes elements of the thinking of Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Suhravardi (d. 1191), Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) and such great Shi'i theologians as Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274) and 'Allamah Hilli (1325), and he was also subjected to the assaults of those who considered his esoteric interpretations of doctrine to be heresy, to whom he exasperatingly responded with a pointed moral invective in his only Persian treatise.2

Sadra's influence gained ground only gradually after his death, but by the nineteenth century his thought had established itself among Shi'i students of philosophy, and the Sharh al-Manzumah of Hakim Sabzavari (d. 1878), which is in agreement with all of the major theses of Sadra's transcendent theosophy, became a standard text for students who privately studied philosophy in the seminaries.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the ulama were confronted by an increasing interest in Marxism among the youth, and they sought to meet this philosophical challenge with an elucidation of the principles of transcendent theosophy. It is for this purpose that 'Allamah Tabataba'i wrote his Usul-e Falsafah va Ravish-e Ri'alism (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism) in Persian, and following his lead, in Najaf, Shahid Baqir Sadr wrote his Falsafatuna (Our Philosophy).3

'Allamah Tabataba'i had studied philosophy in Najaf, and came to Qom shortly after World War II with the express intention of reforming the beliefs of the students of the seminaries and "combating the false doctrines of the materialists and others." When he began openly teaching Mulla Sadra's Asfar, the leading cleric of the time, Ayatullah Burujirdi threatened to cut off the stipends of 'Allamah's students.

Ayatullah Burujirdi confessed that he himself had studied the Asfar, but privately. He had no objection to the continuation of private lessons in philosophy, about the subject was considered dangerous, and it was feared that if publicly taught, it would give rise to unorthodox beliefs. 'Allamah responded that after consulting the poetry of afiz by random selection of a poem, he was convinced that he must not abandon his teaching. The poem beings:

I am not the rascal to abandon,
The beauty nor the goblet,
The guard knows that this deed,
I would not do.

Furthermore, he explained that the students of the seminary did not arrive in a state of ideological purity, but were in need of such teaching to quell the doubts they already had and to prepare them for combat with materialism, and that for this reason he would continue his teaching unless officially ordered by Ayatullah Burujirdi to stop. After this, Ayatullah Burujirdi never again tried to interfere with 'Allamah's teaching, but thereafter always treated 'Allamah with courtesy, and even gave him the gift of a fine copy

of the Qur'an.[4]

The resistance to the public teaching of philosophy did not always stem from disagreement with philosophical principles, but often from religious scruples. It is considered a grave sin to weaken the faith of a Muslim, and philosophy has been viewed as being dangerous because it can plant doubts in the minds of the insufficiently subtle from which they may be unable to extricate themselves.

This idea is even expressed by Ibn Sina, who warns the casual reader not to read any further after the discussions of logic have been completed and philosophy is to begin in his Remarks and Admonitions.[5] It is not uncommon to find such warnings in the works of the philosophers and 'urafa of Islam that a proper background and training is needed before a correct appreciation of the teaching can be expected. Indeed, was this not the point of the inscription above the door to the Academy?

In addition to the public teaching of philosophy, the ideological war between Marxism and Islam led to several innovations in Islamic philosophy. Until the twentieth century, works in Islamic philosophy were written in order to answer questions posed by Muslim thinkers within the context of Islamic culture.

No reference was made to modern European thought. With the threat of Marxism, however, Muslim philosophers addressed themselves to questions raised by the Europeans, especially to epistemological questions. While classical Islamic philosophy was primarily concerned with issues of metaphysics, an important feature of twentieth century Islamic philosophy is its attention to epistemology.

'Allamah Tabataba'i's Usul–Falsafah is the first work of Islamic philosophy to contain a prominent and extended discussion of the epistemological issues associated with modern Western (particularly Marxist) thought, and a similar sort of attention is given to the same issues in Baqir Sadr's Falsafatuna. In these works, as in Prof. Misbah's Philosophical Instructions, skepticism is attacked and the capacities of reason are defended. The modern European rationalists, with attention given primarily to Descartes, are clearly preferred to the empiricists and Kant.

Another reason for the attention given to modern European philosophy and its problems is that Western philosophy had begun to make its way into the curricula of the universities of the Islamic world (where Islamic philosophy, unfortunately, was, and, more unfortunately, continues to be, largely ignored), and translations of several works on European philosophy began to appear in Arabic and Persian.

One of the first traditional masters to study in the West in the twentieth century and return to the seminaries was Sayyid Muhammad Kazim 'Assar, who studied in France and then taught at Najaf and later at the University of Tehran.[6] 'Allamah Tabataba'i apparently became acquainted with Western philosophy through Arabic translations that had made their way to Najaf.

In Iran, Western philosophy was taught at the University of Tehran since its founding, roughly fifty years ago, and even earlier, among the Shi'i scholars, we have evidence that some discussions of Western philosophy were beginning.[7] Prof. Misbah also made use of the Persian translation of several volumes

of Copleston's history, and Furughi's Sayr-e Hikmat, a three volume history of Western philosophy.[8] Although Furughi held a ministerial post in the government of Reza Shah (r. 1925-41), his work is widely esteemed for its accuracy and the introduction of the apparatus of scholarly references.

While the primary aim of 'Allamah's Principles of Philosophy was to meet the challenge of Marxism, one finds evidence in its pages of a deeper attention to Kant and Hume. So, 'Allamah's project of basing a reform of doctrine in the seminaries on transcendent theosophy was begun with an eye toward Western thought generally, and attention was also paid to the natural sciences.

Likewise, in Philosophical Instructions we find an attempt to provide a philosophical foundation for religious belief based on transcendent theosophy and able to quell the doubts of those acquainted with Western philosophy and science. In order to achieve these aims, certain departures from traditional Islamic philosophy are deemed necessary.

For example, for nearly a thousand years cosmology has held a central place in Islamic philosophy. The emanation of the world from Allah was held to occur by means of intermediary intellects, often identified with angels or associated with the celestial spheres. The rejection of the medieval system of the celestial spheres by modern astronomy is an embarrassment to Islamic philosophy.

The solution posed in Philosophical Instructions is to remove astronomy from Islamic philosophy. Given its long association with the subject, however, this is no easy task. Some principle must be found from within the tradition of Islamic philosophy itself on the basis of which the excision can be justified.

The principle proposed in Philosophical Instructions is the exaltation of reason. Reason alone, it is held, is nearly sufficient to serve as a foundation for a philosophy capable of supporting religious doctrine. Furthermore, the only element in addition to reason that is needed can be found through introspection. The concerns of philosophy are solely with what can be discovered by reason and introspection alone. Whatever remains is to be conceded to the empirical sciences.

It may be helpful for the Western reader to compare the strategy employed here with some trends in Christian theology. In some ways, the program initiated by 'Allamah Tabataba'i and continued in Philosophical Instructions is similar to that of neo-Thomism, but with Sadr al-Muta'alihin playing the role of Aquinas.

In both theologies there is a defense of traditional proofs for the existence of God, or natural theology, presented in the context of a philosophical system that retains some features of Aristotelian thought as developed and modified within a religious tradition. In both theologies there is a defense of the ability of reason to justify religion.

If anything, the emphasis on reason is stronger in contemporary Islamic philosophy than among many neo-Thomists, and this is seen as an inherent advantage due to the superior rationality of Islamic doctrine in comparison to Christian beliefs. On the other hand, although liberal Protestant theology has

tended to be skeptical about traditional philosophy, both the liberal Christian and the Muslim philosopher find themselves faced with a contradiction between medieval doctrine and the modern sciences.

Both respond with a protective strategy that would isolate religion from natural science, and both propose that introspection may serve as a focal center for religious thought. However, while introspection is seen by Schleiermacher (d. 1834) as a way to religious experience that is prior to and independent of both theoretical and practical reason, Prof. Misbah views introspection as a way to knowledge by direct apprehension of causal relations and their terms.

These direct apprehensions are then to be understood by means of the conceptual apparatus provided by pure reason. Liberal Protestant theology came to emphasize religious experience and faith, and to disparage reason as fallen and sinful. Islamic philosophy, on the other hand, makes an appeal to the standards of reason, without which religious belief could be dismissed as ungrounded, supplemented with knowledge by presence.

Both Schleiermacher and Prof. Misbah find a complete dependency of human existence through introspection, but while Schleiermacher would eschew the doctrines of any philosophical theology in favor of the experience of this dependency, Prof. Misbah finds through introspection all the data needed to complete a natural theology consonant with transcendent theosophy in which the existence of God is to be proved through rational reflection on direct acquaintance with existence itself.

1. His interpretation of the Qur'an is the twenty volume Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al- Qur'an (Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyyah, n.d.). The English translation by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, has reached eight volumes published in Tehran by the World Organization for Islamic Services, the first volume of which appeared in 1983. His major philosophical texts are Bidayah al-Hikmah and Nihayah al- Hikmah both published in Qom by Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami and by Daftar Tablighat Islami. A. Q. Qara'i has translated the former which has been serialized in Vols. IX-XI of the journal Al-Tawhid. While 'Allamah has not written any systematic work in Islamic mysticism, his views pertaining to this topic have been influential in the works of Ayatullah Javadi Amuli and Ayatullah Husayni Tehrani.
2. Seh Asl (Three Roots [of Evil]), ed., Seyyid Hossein Nasr, (Tehran: University of Tehran Press).
3. 'Allamah Tabataba'i's Usul-e Falsafah va Ravish-e Ri'alism, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sadra, 1368/1989) with the extensive annotations of Shahid Mutahhari was completed in 1332/1953. Baqir Sadr 's Fasafatuna, 10th ed. (Beirut: Dar al- Ta'aruf, 1980) was completed in A. H. L. 1379 (c. 1959).
4. See 'Allamah Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tehrani, Mihr-e Taban (Tehran: Baqir al-'Ulum, n.d.), pp. 60-62.
5. Ibn Sina, Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat, ed. Sulayman Dunya, (Beirut: Mu'assassah al-Nu'man 1413/1992), Vol. II, p. 147.
6. See the article on Islamic philosophy in modern Persia by Mehdi Aminrazavi in History of Islamic Philosophy, 2 vols., ed., Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1995), 1037-1050.
7. A few pages are devoted to a discussion of modern Western philosophy in the Risa'il Hikmiyyah of Ayatullah Mirza 'Ali Akbar Mudarris Yazdi Hakami (d. A. H. L. 1344 (c. 1926), (Tehran: Vizarat-e Irshad-e Islami, 1365/1986).
8. Muhammad 'Ali Furughi, Sayr-e Hikmat dar Urupa (The Course of Philosophy in Europe), (Tehran: Zavar, 1360/1981).

The Author

The author, Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, was born in 1934 in Yazd, where he completed primary studies in the Islamic sciences, and began reading the major classic texts in Islamic law and jurisprudence. In order to pursue advanced studies, he went to Najaf, but due to financial difficulties, he returned to Iran after one year and continued his studies in Qom.

There, from 1952 to 1960, he participated in the classes taught by Imam Khomeini, while at the same time he studied the interpretation of the Qur'an, Ibn Sina's Shifa and Mulla Sadra's Asfar with 'Alamah Tabataba'i. He also spent approximately fifteen years as the student of Ayatullah Bahjat in fiqh.

After his formal studies with Imam Khomeini were put to an end by the latter's exile, he spent some years engaged in discussions about the social significance of Islam, including discussions about jihad, judicature and Islamic government.

Around 1964 he cooperated with Shahid Dr. Biheshti, Shahid Bahonar and Hujjatulislam Hashemi Rafsanjani in resistance to the regime of the Pahlavi shah, and wrote two works, one called Bi'that (The Prophetic Mission) and the other Intiqam (Revenge), the second of which he did the work of publishing himself.

He also participated in the founding of a political organization of the clergy in Qom, that was primarily led by Ayatullah Rabani Shirazi, and that included among its members Ayatullah Khamene'i, Hujjatulislam Rafsanjani and Shahid Qudus. The founding documents of this organization were obtained by the regime and those whose names appeared on it were to be prosecuted, and so they went into hiding, including Ayatullah Misbah.

When the atmosphere cooled down, he was able to return to Qom to continue his scholarly activities. After that, he worked in the administration of Madrassah Haqani along with Ayatullah Jannati, Shahid Bihishti and Shahid Qudus, and for about ten years he taught philosophy and Qur'anic studies there.

Then, shortly before and following the Islamic Revolution, with the support and encouragement of Imam Khomein he participated in the founding of several schools and institutes, among the most important of which was the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute, the Baqir al-'Ulum Foundation and the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute which he currently directs and where he is teaching the Asfar of Sadr al-Din Shirazi.

He was recently elected (1996) to a five year term as representative of Khuzistan province to the the Majlis-e Khubrigan (Counsel of Experts). Among the works authored by Prof. Misbah, the following are some of the most important:

● Chikideh-ye Chand Bahth-e Falsafi (A Summary of Some Philosophical Discussions), Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq, 1357/1978). This is a summary of discussions held in London through the course of a series of conferences, along with the comments of Iranian students residing in the U.S., on the concept of philosophy and the course of its history, rational knowledge and its value, cause and effect, the fixed and the fluid and actuality and ability.

● Pasdari az Sangarha-ye Iydi'uluzhik (A Sentry from the Ideological Trenches), Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq, 1361/1982). This book is a compilation of shorter pieces written by the author, plus an article by Dr. Ahmad Ahmadi concerning idealism and realism. The topics discussed by Prof. Misbah include: worldview, knowledge, cause and effect, motion, dialectic and the materialist worldview.

● Iydi'uluzhi Tatbiqi (Comparative Ideology), Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq, 1361/1982. This book consists of forty lessons delivered by the author following the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and later transcribed and edited. Topics discussed include the concept of ideology, the relation between world-view and ideology, types of world view, metaphysical concepts, epistemological concepts, the reality of the external world, sophism and skepticism, realism and idealism, types of knowledge, types of intelligibles, the fundamentality of reason in imagination, the philosophies of Descartes , Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant, empiricism in Marx ist theory and the scopes of the types of knowledge.

● Durus Falsafah (Philosophy Lessons), Tehran: Mu'assisah Mutali'at va Tahqiqat Farhangi, 1363/1984). This is an abridged version of the same lectures from which Amuzish-e Falsafah was compiled.

● Ta'liqah 'ala Nahayat al-Hikmah (A Commentary on Nahayat al-Hikmah), Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute, A. H. 1405/1985. This book, written in Arabic, is perhaps the author's most penetrating philosophical work. In it he presents a subtle analysis and sharp critique of the major philosophical work of his teacher, 'Allamah Tabataba'i's advanced lessons in Islamic philosophy.

● Durus-e Falsafeh-ye Akhlaq (Lessons in Philosophical Ethics), Tehran: Itila'at, 1367/1988. The eighteen lessons of this book were delivered at the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute, transcribed and edited. They include discussions of the place of ethics in philosophy, characteristics of ethical concepts, rational good and evil, value concepts, ethical schools of thought, relativism and the relation between ethics and religion.

● Usul-e 'Aqa'id (Principles of Doctrine) 2 vols. Qom: Markaz-e Mudiriyyat Hawzah 'Ilmiyyah, 1368/1989. This book was commissioned by the administration of the seminaries of Qom as a text for its students. The first volume is devoted to discussions of divine unity and divine justice. The second volume contains discussions of the missions of the prophets and Imams ('a).

● Mu'arif-e Qur'an (The Teachings of the Qur'an), Qom: Dar Rah-e Haqq, 1368/1989). This work is divided into three parts: theology, cosmology and anthropology.

● Jam'ah va Tarikh az Didgah-e Qur'an (Society and History from the Perspective of the Qur'an), Qom:

Sazman Tablighat Islami, 1368/1989. This books consists of a series of lectures originally presented at the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute and transcribed from tapes by Aqa-ye Malikiyan. Various issues related to the philosophy of the social sciences are raised, such as the relation of the individual to society and the question of which has priority, the Islamic Revolution and leadership in Islam.

● Hukumat Islami va Vilayat-e Faqiyyah (Islamic Government and the Guardianship of the Jurist), Qom: Sazman Tablighat Islami, 1369/1990. This is a compilation of lectures delivered at the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute on the need for Islamic government, the need for law in society, characteristics of legislature, the cause of differences in divine laws in Islamic societies, conflicts in judgments and standards of importance, the need for a legislative assembly in the Islamic system, the apparatus of government in the Islamic system, freedoms, prerequisites and responsibilities of the Islamic ruler, the guardianship of the jurist.

● Amuzesh-e 'Aqa'id (Instructions in Doctrine) 3 vols. Qom: Sazman Tablighat Islami, 1370/1991. This work was prepared by Prof. Misbah with the assistance of a group of the scholars at Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute for students of an intermediate level of study. Each volume consists of twenty lessons, among which are discussions of such topics as the nature of theology, religious studies, proofs of the Necessary Existent, the Attributes of God, a criticism of materialism, divine unity, free will and determinism, the need for the prophets and Imams and their inerrancy, the Qur'an, Imam Mahdi, the immateriality of the spirit, the resurrection, the afterlife, faith and infidelity and intercession.

● Akhlaq dar Qur'an (Ethics in the Qur'an), Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1372/1993. This work is a transcription of lectures delivered at the Dar Rah-e Haqq Institute edited by Aqa-ye Iskandari. This work not only elucidates the principles of ethics to be derived from the Qur'an, but it compares the perspective on ethics to be found among Muslim writers with those of other schools of thought, and it defends a philosophical approach to ethics within Islamic tradition.

● Tarjomeh va Sharh-e Burhan-e Shifa (Translation and Commentary on the "Demonstration" of the Shifa), Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1373/1994. This is a translation and commentary of the first part of Ibn Sina 's chapter on logic in his Shifa, transcribed from lectures and edited by Muhsin Gharaviyan.

● Rahiyyan-e Ku-ye Dust (Paths to the Mountain of the Friend), Qom: The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, 1374/1995. This is a collection of twenty lectures on Islamic morals, covering such topics as reliance on God, divine love, the need for attention in prayer, the afterlife and how to love God, presented in the form of a commentary on reports pertaining to what was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (S) during his mi'raj (ascension).

● Rah-e Tusheh (Provisions for the Road), Qom: The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, 1375/1996. This is a collection of twenty lectures on Islamic morals presented in the form of a commentary on a famous hadith in which the advice of the Prophet of Islam (S) to Abu Dhar is reported.

● Sharh-e Asfar al-Arba'ah, Vol. I (Commentary on the Four Journeys), Qom: The Imam Khomeini

Education and Research Institute, 1375/1996. This is the first volume of transcriptions of lectures on Mulla Sadra's masterpiece.

The Translation

The translation was begun in 1992 as a collaborative effort by Azim Sarvdalir and Muhammad Legenhausen and has been supported by the Baqir al–'Ulum Foundation and later by its successor, the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute. The learning made possible through cooperative translation with native speakers of both languages warrants further attention.

Each of the translators benefited enormously by the work of the other. The result far exceeds what could be expected by summing the separate talents of the translators. This is not to boast of any brilliance for the final product. This translation was undertaken as a learning process.

Our aim has been to produce an accurate translation in a relatively fluent style of academic English that can be of service to the beginning student of Islamic philosophy. For this reason, all technical terms have been transliterated in parentheses beside the English terms coined to represent them.

Finding a useful English expression has often been difficult. Sometimes the nearest equivalent English word has a somewhat different sense than the Arabic or Farsi term, and a proper understanding of the text turns upon the difference. Sometimes distinct Arabic terms come closest to a single English word, as there are good reasons for translating both dhat and mahiyyah as "essence".

While other more experienced translators have used "essence" and "quiddity" respectively for these two terms, I have shunned "quiddity" because it is not used in philosophy in English, while "essence" is used by English speaking philosophers, but in different contexts for what the Muslim philosopher would express by one or the other of the Arabic terms.

I began by translating both as "essence" with the Arabic in parentheses, but this made the passages in which both terms occur nearly unintelligible if one read only the English. Finally, William Chittick's suggestion to use "whatness" for mahiyyah has been adopted (leading to the use of "whatish" for mahuwi).[1] This makes for an artificial English, but it is less confusing, and once one gets accustomed to it, the literal affinity of "whatness" to the Arabic mahuwiyyah seems to convey its sense better than other suggestions. "Essence" has been retained for dhat (and "essential" for dhati) although this also leads to divergence from contemporary philosophical usage.

In Islamic philosophy, the essential (dhati) is that pertaining to the entity in question, intrinsically, in itself, while in contemporary English philosophical usage, essential properties are those the entity must have to

retain its identity or to exist as what it is. On the other hand, we have often found that a single Arabic or Persian word has various meanings which must be translated by different English terms, as the notorious i'tibari, which can be used to indicate that something is subordinate, or that it is a mere respect, or that it lacks entified ('ayni) reality, or that it pertains to value rather than fact, and there are other meanings.

Here the term is translated as respectival, unless another meaning is clearly indicated, in which case the Arabic is transliterated. These observations belie the reliability of back-translation as an adequate test of accuracy. We have often found that in order to make the author's point clear, we have to phrase a sentence in such a way that if the English were translated back into Farsi, the result would be different from the original. Near synonymy in translation is not a symmetric relation.

Starting with Lesson 11, on epistemology, this translation first appeared serialized in Al-Tawhid, beginning with Vol. XI, Nos. 3 & 4, 1414/1994, p. 96f. We are grateful for the sensitive editing of Ali Quli Qara'i, although we accept responsibility for the infelicities and inconsistencies that remain.

1. William C. Chittick, The Self-Disclosure of God (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. xx.

Part 1: Introductory Discussions

Lesson 1: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (From Its Origins to the Islamic Epoch)
Lesson 2: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century)
Lesson 3: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (In The Last Two Centuries)
Lesson 4: The Technical Meanings of Science and Philosophy
Lesson 5: Philosophy And The Sciences
Lesson 6: What is Philosophy?
Lesson 7: The Position of Philosophy
Lesson 8: The Method of Philosophical Inquiry
Lesson 9: The Relation between Philosophy and the Sciences
Lesson 10: The Necessity of Philosophy

Lesson 1: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought

Lesson 1: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (From Its Origins to the Islamic Epoch)

The Beginning of Philosophical Thought

The history of human thought as well as the creation of man goes back beyond history. Wherever he has lived, thought has been an inseparable characteristic of man. Wherever he has placed his feet, he has taken thinking and intellection with him.

There is no certain and precise information about the unwritten thoughts of man except that which has been surmised by archaeologists on the basis of uncovered remains. However, written thought has remained behind as caravan of history has passed, since the time of written language.

Among the kinds of human thought, that which is related to the knowledge of existence and to its beginning and end, at first were mixed with religious beliefs. Therefore it may be said that one must look for the oldest philosophical thoughts among oriental religious thoughts.

Historians of philosophy believe that the most ancient collections that are purely philosophical or that are predominantly philosophical are related to the Greek sages, who lived approximately six centuries before Christ (peace be with him).

Scholars of that time are mentioned who have tried to come to know existence, and the beginning and end of the cosmos. In order to interpret the appearance and changes that occur in existents, they expressed different and occasionally contradictory opinions, and at the same time, they do not hide the fact that their thoughts were influenced more or less by oriental religious beliefs and culture.

In any case, the free atmosphere for discussion and criticism in the Greece of those days prepared the ground for developing and taking pride in philosophical thought. That area was turned into a nursery for philosophy.

Naturally, the beginning thoughts were not properly organized and arranged, and the problems for research were not precisely categorized, let alone that each category should have a specific name and title and characteristic method. In sum, all ideas were called science (ʻilm), wisdom (hikmat) and knowledge (maʻrifat), and the like.

The Appearance of Sophism and Skepticism

In the fifth century B.C., scholars are mentioned who in the Greek language were called “sophists”, that is, sage and learned. But in spite of their vast information they had about the knowledge then current, they did not believe in fixed truths, and they did not consider any thing to be definitely known or certain.

As reported by historians of philosophy, they were professional teachers who taught rhetoric and debate, and they trained defense lawyers for the courts, for which there was much demand at that time. This profession required the defense lawyer to be able to establish any claim and to be able to reject all sorts of opposing claims. Dealing with this sort of teaching which was often subject to fallacy, gradually brought about a kind of thinking according to which basically there is no truth beyond human thought!

You have heard the story of a man who jokingly said that in such and such a house sweets are being given away. In their simplicity, the people hurried to crowd around the door of the mentioned house. Little by little, the speaker himself began to harbor suspicions about the matter, and so as not to lose out on the chance for free sweets, he joined the line.

It seems as if the Sophists also were victims of this same fate. By teaching fallacious methods to establish and deny claims, little by little such tendencies came to appear in their own thinking, that basically truth and falsehood depend on human thought, and in conclusion that there is no truth beyond human thought!

The expression "sophism," which meant sage and learned, due to being ascribed to such mentioned people, lost its fundamental meaning, and it came to be used as a symbol and sign for a way of thinking according to fallacious reasoning. It is this same expression that in Arabic has taken the form “sufisti” and the term “safsatah” is derived from it.

The Period of the Flourishing of Philosophy

The most famous thinker who stood up against the Sophists and who criticized their ideas and views was Socrates. It was he who called himself philosophus, that is, a lover of wisdom. It is this same expression that in Arabic took the form filsuf from which the term falsafah is derived.

Historians of philosophy consider there to be two causes for the choice of this name: one is the humility of Socrates, who always was confessing his own ignorance, and the other is his objection to the Sophists who called themselves sages, that is, with the choice of this title, he wanted to make them understand: You, who for the sake of material and political aims engage in discussion and debate, teaching and learning, are not worthy of the name ‘sage’, and even I, who reject your ideas with the firmest of reasons, do not consider myself worthy of this title, and I merely call myself a lover of wisdom.

After Socrates, his student, Plato, who for years profited from his lessons, endeavored to establish the

principles of philosophy, and then, his student, Aristotle, brought philosophy to the pinnacle of its flourishing, and formalized the principles of thought and reasoning in the form of the science of logic, as he formulated the pitfalls of thought in the form of a section on the fallacies.

Ever since Socrates called himself a philosopher, the expression philosophy has been used as opposed to sophistry, and it embraces all the real sciences, such as physics, chemistry, medicine, astronomy, mathematics and theology. Even today in many of the world's most renowned libraries, the books of physics and chemistry are classified under philosophy, and only conventional disciplines, such as vocabulary, syntax and grammar, are outside the realm of philosophy.

In this way, philosophy came to be considered as a common noun for all the real sciences, and it was divided into two general groups: theoretical sciences and practical sciences. The theoretical sciences include the natural sciences, mathematics and theology, and the natural sciences in their turn include the fields of cosmogony, mineralogy, botany and zoology, and mathematics is divided into arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

Theology is divided into two parts: metaphysics or general discussions of existence, and theology proper. The practical sciences are divided into three branches: morality, domestic economy and politics.

1. Theoretical

a) natural sciences:

● the general principles of bodies,

b) cosmogony, mineralogy, botany, zoology

c) mathematics:

● arithmetic

● geometry

● astronomy

● music

d) theology:

● the general principles of existence

● divinity

2. Philosophy

a) Theoretical

- ethics (regarding the individual)
- domestic economy (regarding the family)
- politics (regarding the community)

The End of Greek Philosophy

After Plato and Aristotle, for some time their students occupied themselves with the compilation, arrangement and elaboration on the works of their masters, and more or less kept the market for philosophy brisk. It did not take long, however, for this briskness to be replaced by stagnation, and that prosperity and thriving began to fail, and in Greece there came to be few customers for the commodities of science and knowledge.

The masters of the arts and sciences came to dwell in Alexandria, where they engaged in research and education. This city remained the center of science and philosophy until the fourth century.

But when the Roman emperors converted to Christianity, and propagated the beliefs of the Church as official beliefs and ideas, they began to oppose the free realm of thought and science, until finally Justinian, the Eastern Roman Emperor, in the year A.D. 529, issued the edict to close the universities and schools of Athens and Alexandria, and the scholars fled for their lives, and they sought refuge in other cities and lands. In this reason the gleaming torch of science and philosophy was extinguished in the Roman Empire.

The Dawn of the Sun of Islam

Simultaneous with the above mentioned process (in the sixth century of the Christian era), in another corner of the world, the greatest event of history occurred, and the Arabian Peninsula was witness to the birth, mission and migration of the eminent Prophet of Islam, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny.

He read the message of Divine guidance in the ear of the consciousness of the world. As a first step, he called upon people to acquire knowledge,[1] and he held reading, writing and learning in the highest regard. He founded the greatest civilization and most thriving culture in the world. He encouraged his followers to acquire knowledge and wisdom from the cradle to the grave (min al-mahd ila al-lahd), from the nearest to the furthest points on the globe (even if to China, wa law bil-sin), and at whatever cost (wa law bi-safk al-muhaj wa khawdh al-lujaj).[2]

The prolific sapling of Islam planted by the powerful hand of the Messenger of God (S) in the life giving radiance of Divine revelation and nourished by other cultures grew and yielded fruit. Islam absorbed the

raw material of human thought according to proper Divine standards and changed them into useful elements in the forge of constructive criticism, and in a short period it spread its shade over all the cultures of the world.

In the shade of the encouragement of the Noble Messenger (S) and his impeccable successors, Muslims began to acquire various sciences, and the scientific heritages of Greece, Rome and Iran were translated into Arabic. They absorbed the useful elements and supplemented them with their own inquiries, and in most fields they were able to make important discoveries, as in algebra, trigonometry, astronomy, perspective, physics and chemistry.

Another important factor of the growth of Islamic culture was politics. The oppressive Ummayyids and Abbasids who illegitimately occupied the seat of Islamic government felt a severe need for popular approval among the Muslims, while the Household of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt, may the blessings of Allah be with all of them, that is, those who were the legitimate guardians (awliyah) of the peoples, were the source of knowledge and the treasury of the Divine revelation.

The governing regime had no means to attract people except threats and bribes. Hence, they tried to make their regime prosper by encouraging scholars and gathering authorities, and by using the Greek, Roman and Iranian sciences, they tried to open a shop in opposition to the Ahl al-Bayt.

In this way, various philosophical ideas and types of knowledge and crafts with diverse motivations by means of friends and foes, entered the Islamic environment, and the Muslims began to inquire about, adopt and criticize them, and brilliant figures began to appear in the world of science and philosophy in the Islamic environment, each of whom developed a branch of the sciences by his own constant endeavors, and Islamic culture bore fruit.

Among them, the scholars of Islamic theology and doctrine reviewed and criticized the problems of divine philosophy from different viewpoints, and however much some of them went to extremes in their criticisms, this sort of criticism and nit-picking, questioning and raising doubts caused most of the Islamic thinkers and philosophers to try harder, leading to the enrichment of intellectual and philosophical thought.

The Development of Philosophy in the Islamic Epoch

With the widening of the realm of Islamic government and the inclination of different peoples to this life giving religion, many centers of learning of the world came to be included within the realm of Islam.

There was a great exchange of ideas among scholars, exchange of books among libraries and translation of these books from various languages: Hindi, Farsi, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Hebrew, etc., into Arabic, which had become the de facto international language of the Muslims, and this accelerated the pace of the development of philosophy, the sciences and the crafts. Many books of the philosophers of

Greece and Alexandria, and other reputable centers of learning were rendered into Arabic.

In the beginning, the lack of a common language and technical terms agreed upon by the translators, and the discrepancies regarding the principles of Eastern and Western philosophy made the teaching of philosophy difficult and made research and selection among these principles even more difficult. But it was not very long before geniuses such as Abu Nasr Farabi and Ibn Sina were able to learn the entire sum of philosophical thought of that time by their constant efforts.

With God given talents that flourished under the radiance of the light of revelation and the explanations of the Imams, they were then able to review and select from among the appropriate philosophical principles and to present a mature philosophical system, which in addition to including Platonic and Aristotelian ideas and Neo-Platonic thought from Alexandria, and the ideas of oriental mystics (‘urafa) also included new thoughts and was thus able to excel over all the systems of philosophy of the East and West, although the largest portion of the new system was Aristotelian, and for this reason their philosophy had an Aristotelian and peripatetic color.

Later, this philosophical system came under the critical magnifying glass of thinkers such as Ghazali, Abu al-Barakat Baghdadi and Fakhr Razi. On the other hand, taking advantage of the works of the sages of ancient Iran, and comparing them with the works of Plato, the Stoics and the Neo-Platonists, Suhravardi founded a new school of philosophy, called Illuminationist philosophy, which had a more Platonic color.

In this way, new ground was prepared for the encounter among philosophical ideas and their development and ripening. Centuries later, great philosophers such as Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, Muhaqqiq Dawani, Sayyid Sadr al-Din Dashtaki, Shaykh Baha’i and Mir Damad were able to supplement the enrichment of Islamic philosophy with their own brilliant ideas.

Then came the turn of Sadr al-Din Shirazi who introduced a new system of philosophy with his own genius and innovation which was composed of the harmonious elements of peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophies and mystical disclosures, to which he added profound thoughts and valuable ideas, and he called it transcendent theosophy (hikmat muta‘aliyyah).

1. Consider the first verses revealed to the Prophet (S), “Read! In the Name of your Lord Who created... Who taught by the Pen....” (96:1, 4).
2. Allusion is made here to several well-known hadiths attributed to the Prophet (S).

Lesson 2: A Glance at the Course of

Philosophical Thought

Lesson 2: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century)

Scholastic Philosophy

After the spread of Christianity in Europe and the combination of the power of the Church with that of the Roman Empire, the centers of learning came under the influence of the apparatus of government to such an extent that by the sixth century (as was indicated previously) the universities and schools of Athens and Alexandria were closed.

This period, which lasted for about one thousand years, is called the middle Ages, and is characterized by the domination of the Church over the centers of learning and the programs of the schools and universities.

Among the prominent personalities of this era is St. Augustine, who tried to use philosophical principles, especially the views of Plato and the Neo-Platonists to explain the dogmas of Christianity. After him, a number of philosophical discussions were included in the programs of the schools.

However, the attitude toward Aristotelian thought was unfavorable for it was considered to be opposed to religious beliefs, and its teaching was prohibited. With the dominion of the Muslims in al-Andalus (Spain) and the penetration of Islamic thought in Western Europe, the ideas of Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) were more or less discussed, and the Christian scholars also became acquainted with Aristotelian views by means of the books of these philosophers.

Little by little members of the Church could not resist this wave of philosophical thought, and finally St. Thomas Aquinas accepted most of Aristotle's philosophical views which are reflected in his own books, and gradually, opposition to Aristotle's philosophy decreased, and even came to dominate some centers of learning.

In any case, in the Middle Ages philosophy not only developed in Western lands, but also went through a course of decline, and contrary to the world of Islam, in which the sciences and learning continually flourished and became increasingly enriched, in Europe the only discussions taught in the Church affiliated schools, and which came to be called scholastic philosophy, were those which could justify the dogmas of Christianity, dogmas which were not without deviation themselves.

It goes without saying that such philosophy could have no destiny but death and extinction.
In scholastic philosophy, besides logic, theology, ethics, politics, and some natural philosophy and astronomy which were accepted by the Church, grammar and rhetoric were also incorporated into the

curricula, and in this way, the philosophy of this period was considered more broadly [than at present].

The Renaissance and the Comprehensive Change in Thinking

From the fourteenth century the ground was being prepared for a comprehensive change by means of various factors. One factor was the flourishing of nominalism (the fundamentality of naming) and the denial of the existence of universals in England and France.

This philosophical tendency played an effective role in undermining the foundations of philosophy. Another factor was that the natural philosophy of Aristotle became a matter of controversy at the University of Paris.

Another factor was the murmurings of the incompatibility of philosophy with Christian dogma, and in other words, the incompatibility of reason and religion. Another factor was the manifestation of disagreements between the temporal rulers and the authorities of the Church,
and among the Christian authorities themselves there were also disputes which led to the emergence of Protestantism.

Yet another factor was the cresting of humanism and the tendency to deal with the problems of human life while disregarding metaphysical problems. Finally, in the middle of the fifteenth century, the Byzantine Empire collapsed, and a complete change (political, philosophical, literary and religious) appeared throughout Europe, and the institutions of the papacy were attacked from every side. In this course, the weak scholastic philosophy reached its final destiny.

In the sixteenth century, interest in the natural and empirical sciences became intense, and the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo shook the foundations of Ptolemaic astronomy and Aristotelian natural philosophy. In a word, in Europe all aspects of human affairs were subjected to disturbance and instability.

The papal institutions were able to withstand these roaring waves for quite some time, and scientists were brought before the inquisition with the excuse of their opposition to religious dogmas, that is, for their views on natural philosophy and cosmology which were accepted by the Church for the exegesis of the Bible and religious doctrines. Many were burnt in the fires of blind fanaticism and selfishness of the authorities of the Church. However, eventually the Church and papal institution were forced to withdraw in shame.

The ruthless fanatical behavior of the Catholic Church had no effect but to give the people a negative attitude toward the authorities of the Church, and in general toward religion, and likewise the downfall of scholastic philosophy, that is, the only current philosophy of that period, brought about an intellectual and philosophical vacuum, and finally the appearance of modern skepticism.

During this process, the only thing that made progress was humanism, and a desire for natural and

empirical science in the cultural arena, and a tendency toward liberalism and democracy in the field of politics.

The Second Phase of Skepticism

For centuries, the Church had spread the views and ideas of some philosophers as religious beliefs, and Christians had accepted them as certain and sacred, including Aristotelian and Ptolemaic views of cosmology which were upset by Copernicus, and other unbiased scholars also realized their invalidity. We have already mentioned that the dogmatic resistance of the Church and the ruthless behavior of the authorities of the Church with respect to the scientists brought about adverse reaction.

This change in thoughts and beliefs and the toppling of the intellectual and philosophical foundations [of the Middle Ages] brought about a psychological crises in many of the scholars, and raised doubts in their minds such as: how can we be sure that other beliefs we hold are not invalid, and that one day their invalidity will not become evident? How can we know that newly discovered scientific theories will not also be invalidated someday?

Finally, a great scholar named Montaigne denied the value of science and knowledge and he explicitly wrote, how can we be sure that the theory of Copernicus will not be invalidated in the future? He once more expressed the doubts of the skeptics and sophists in a new way, and defended skepticism, and thus another phase of skepticism appeared.

The Peril of Skepticism

The attitude of doubt, in addition to being a painful psychological plague, also involves great spiritual and material perils for society. With the denial of the value of knowledge, there can be no hope for the advancement of the sciences and learning, likewise no room remains for moral values and their magnificent role in human life, as religion also loses its intellectual basis.

Rather, the greatest blows are directed toward religious dogmas, beliefs unrelated to material and sensible affairs. When the flood of doubt flows through the hearts of the people, naturally, the beliefs about the super natural are the most vulnerable. Therefore, skepticism is an extremely dangerous plague that threatens all aspects of human life with destruction, and with its spread no ethical, legal, political or religious system can remain stable, and it provides an excuse for all sorts of crimes, injustice and oppression.

For this very reason, the struggle against skepticism is a duty of all scholars and philosophers, and it is also a responsibility for religious leaders, and it is also a matter about which counselors, politicians and social reformers must be diligent.

In the seventeenth century various activities were undertaken to shore up the ruins of the Renaissance,

including struggle against the perils of skepticism. The Church tended to cut off the dependence of Christianity on reason and science, and fortified religious doctrines through the heart and faith. However, philosophers and scholars sought a firm and unshakable basis for knowledge and value, so that intellectual fluctuations and social upheavals would not destroy them.

Modern Philosophy

The most important effort of this period for salvation from skepticism and the revitalization of philosophy was that of Rene Descartes, the French philosopher who is called “the father of modern philosophy”.

After much research and meditation, he devised a plan by which to bolster the footings of philosophical thought; his principle may be summarized in his famous proposition: “I doubt, therefore I am,” or “I think, therefore I am”, that is, if one follows the way of doubt regarding the existence of everything, one will nonetheless never be able to doubt one’s own existence.

Since doubt is meaningless without one who doubts, the human existence of doubters and thinkers is also indubitable. Then he tried to formulate specific laws of thought similar to mathematical laws and to solve the problems of philosophy on their basis.

In that period of intellectual tumult, the thought and views of Descartes were a source of reassurance for many scholars; and other great thinkers, such as Leibniz, Spinoza and Malebranch, also sought to reinforce the groundwork of modern philosophy. Nevertheless, these efforts were unable to bring about a harmonious philosophical system having certain and consolidated foundations.

On the other hand, the attention of the majority of scholars had turned toward the empirical sciences, many of whom displayed no interest in research in philosophical and metaphysical problems.

Because of this, a strong, firm and well-supported philosophical system did not come into existence in Europe, and although collections of philosophical views and ideas occasionally were proposed in the form of specific schools of philosophical thought which within certain limits were able to win more or less of a following, still none of them was able to become permanently established, as remains the case.

The Fundamentality of Experience and Modern Skepticism

While rational philosophy was being revived on the continent of Europe, and reason was about to find its own place in the understanding of truth, another tendency was making progress in England, which was based on the fundamentality of sense and experience, called empiricism.

The beginnings of this tendency go back to the end of the Middle Ages and to William of Ockham, an English philosopher who was a proponent of the fundamentality of naming, and was also actually a denier of the fundamentality of reason.

In the sixteenth century, Francis Bacon, and in the seventeenth century, Hobbes, who were also English, both relied upon the fundamentality of sense and experience, but those who are known as empiricists are another three English philosophers: John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume, who discussed the problems of knowledge from the end of the seventeenth century until about one century later, and while criticizing the views of Descartes regarding “innate knowledge”, they considered the source of all knowledge to be sense and experience.

Among them, John Locke was the most moderate and nearest to the rationalists. Berkeley was an avowed proponent of the fundamentality of naming, i.e., a nominalist, but (perhaps unconsciously) he resorted to the principle of causation, which is a rational principle, and likewise he had other views that were incompatible with the fundamentality of sense and experience.

But Hume remained completely loyal to the fundamentality of sense and experience, and to its implications and he bound himself to skepticism regarding the metaphysical, and to an acceptance of the reality of natural phenomena. In this way, the third phase of skepticism in the history of Western philosophy took shape.

Kant’s Critical Philosophy

Hume’s thoughts are among those which formed the groundwork for the philosophical ideas of Kant, and in his own words, “It is Hume who awakened me from my dogmatic slumber,” and Kant especially found agreeable Hume’s explanation of the principle of causality, which was based on the idea that experience cannot establish a necessary relation between cause and effect.

For many long years Kant thought about the problems of philosophy, and wrote many essays and books. He offered a specific philosophical view which in comparison to similar sorts of views was more durable and acceptable. But he finally arrived at the conclusion that theoretical reason does not have the ability to solve the problems of metaphysics and that the rational principles in this field lack scientific value.

He explicitly declared that problems such as the existence of God, the eternity of the soul and free will could not be established by rational proofs, but that belief and faith in them is implied by the acceptance of an ethical system, in other words, it is an accepted principle of the precepts of practical reason, and that it is ethics which calls us to faith in the resurrection, not the reverse.

For this reason, Kant must be considered as a reviver of ethical values, which after the Renaissance were subject to instability and were in danger of fading and being obliterated. On the other hand, he must be considered to be one of the destroyers of the foundations of metaphysical philosophy.

Lesson 3: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought

Lesson 3: A Glance at the Course of Philosophical Thought (In The Last Two Centuries)

Objective Idealism

As was indicated earlier, after the Renaissance, no stable philosophical system came into existence, but rather different philosophical schools and views constantly have been and are being born and dying. The number and variety of schools and "–isms" has increased since the nineteenth century. In this brief overview there is no occasion to mention all of them, and we shall merely provide a brief mention of some of them:

After Kant (from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century) a number of German philosophers became famous, whose ideas more or less found their source in the thought of Kant. They sought to compensate for the weak points in his philosophy by using mystical sources, and although there were differences among their views, what they had in common was that they began from an individual viewpoint and paid heed to the explanation of being and the appearance of multiplicity from unity in a poetic way, and they were called "Romantic philosophers".

Among them, Fichte, who personally was a student of Kant, was extremely interested in free will, and among the views of Kant, he emphasized the fundamentality of morals and practical reason. He said, "Theoretical reason observes the system of nature as necessary, but within ourselves we find freedom and a desire for voluntary actions, and our consciences design a system that we must attempt to realize. Hence we must consider nature to be subordinate to the ego, and not independent and unrelated to it."

It is this tendency towards freedom which drove him and other romantics such as Schelling to accept a kind of idealism and the fundamentality of the spirit (a characteristic of which was considered to be freedom). This school of thought was further developed by Hegel, and it took the form of a relatively coherent system of philosophy, and was called objective idealism.

Hegel, who was a contemporary of Schelling, imagined the world to be the thoughts and ideas of the absolute spirit, and that between them [the spirit and its thoughts and ideas] there are logical relations rather than causal relations, as held by other philosophers.

According to Hegel, the course of the appearance of ideas is from unity to multiplicity, from the general to the specific. At the first level, the most general idea, the idea of being, is posited, from within which the opposite, i.e., the idea of nothingness, emerges.

Then they become mixed and take the form of the idea of “becoming”. Becoming, which is the synthesis of being (thesis) and nothingness (antithesis), in its turn is posited as a thesis, and its opposite appears from within it, and from the mixture of them a new synthesis occurs.

This process continues until it reaches the most specific of concepts. Hegel called this threefold (triadic) process “dialectic”, and he fancied that this was a universal law for the appearance of all mental and objective phenomena.

Positivism

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Frenchman Auguste Compte, who is called the father of sociology, founded an extreme form of empiricism called positivism, whose basis was limited to that which is given directly by the senses, and from one perspective it was considered the opposite of idealism.[1]

Compte even considered the abstract concepts of science that were not obtained from direct observation to be metaphysical and unscientific. He even went so far as to consider metaphysical propositions to be basically absurd and meaningless words.

Auguste Compte held that there were three stages of human thought: first, the divine and religious stage, which relates events to supernatural causes. Second is the philosophical stage, which seeks the cause of events in invisible substances and natures of things. Third is the scientific stage, which instead of looking for the reason why phenomena occur, deals with the question of how they occur and their interrelationships, and this is the stage of positive science.

It is strange that he at last confessed that religion is necessary for man, but he set humanity as its object of worship. He considered himself to be the messenger of this creed, and he set up rituals for individual and group worship.

The creed of the worship of man, which is a perfect example of humanism, found some followers in France, England, Sweden and in North and South America, who formally converted to this creed and established temples for the worship of man. It influenced others indirectly in ways that cannot be mentioned here.

Rationalism and Empiricism

Western philosophical schools are divided into two general groups: rationalist and empiricist. An obvious example of the first group in the nineteenth century is the idealism of Hegel, which even found followers in Britain; and the obvious example of the second group is positivism, which is still current today.

Wittgenstein, Carnap and Russell may be considered supporters of this school of thought.
Most of the divine philosophers have been rationalists, and most of the atheists are empiricists. Among

the minor philosophers was McTaggert, who was a British Hegelian and an atheist.

The proportionate relationship between empiricism and the denial or at least skepticism regarding metaphysics is clear, and it was such that the progress of positivist philosophies was followed by materialist and atheistic inclinations. The lack of strong competitors on the side of the rationalists prepared the ground for the prevalence of such inclinations.

As was mentioned, the most famous of the rationalist schools of thought during the nineteenth century was the Idealism of Hegel. Despite its attraction which was a result of its relatively coherent system, its breadth, and its capacity for looking at problems from different perspectives, it lacked a strong logic and firm reasoning, and it was not long before it became the subject of criticism even by its own adherents.

Among them there were two kinds of simultaneous but different reactions in opposition to it, one of which was led by Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish cleric, the founder of existentialism, and another was led by Karl Marx, a Jewish born German: the founder of dialectical materialism.

Romanticism, which appeared to justify human freedom, finally took the form of an inclusive philosophical system in Hegelian Idealism, and it introduced history as a great fundamental process that advances and progresses on the basis of dialectical principles. In this way it deviated from the basic course, for on this view, the individual will lose its fundamental role. Hence, it became subject to much criticism.

One of those who severely criticized the logic and history of Hegel was Kierkegaard, who emphasized individual responsibility and the free will of man in his own self-construction. He considered the humanity of man to be due to an awareness of individual responsibilities, especially responsibilities toward God, and he said that it is closeness, nearness and relation to God which makes a man human.

This tendency which was supported by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, led to the appearance of existentialism. Thinkers such as Heidegger and Jaspers in Germany, and Marcel and Jean-Paul Sartre in France adhered to this sort of philosophy from different perspectives, theistic and atheistic.

Dialectical Materialism

After the Renaissance, when philosophy and religion in Europe went through a crisis, atheism and materialism more or less came into vogue, and in the nineteenth century, some biologists and physicians such as Vogt, Buchner, and Ernst Haeckel emphasized the fundamentality of matter and the denial of metaphysics, but the most important materialist school of philosophy was that founded by Marx and Engels.

Marx took dialectical logic and the fundamentality of history from Hegel, and materialism from Feuerbach, and he considered the economic factor to be fundamental to social and historical changes, which he supposed to take shape according to dialectical principles, especially on the basis of opposition

and contradiction. He introduced the economic factor as the cornerstone of all aspects of human life, and he considered all other aspects of culture and society to be subordinate to it.

He held that the history of man has various stages, which begin with the first level of primitive communism then passes through the stages of slavery, feudalism and capitalism until it reaches socialism and the government of the workers, and at last leads to communism, that is, the stage in which ownership is completely abolished and there will be no need for any state or government.

Pragmatism

At the conclusion of this brief review, let us take a glance at the only philosophical school of thought brought about by American thinkers, at the threshold of the twentieth century, the most famous of whom is William James the renowned psychologist and philosopher.

This school, which is called pragmatism (i.e., the fundamentality of action) considers a proposition to be true which possesses practical use. In other words, truth is a meaning constructed by the mind in order to obtain more and better practical consequences.

This point has not been explicitly proclaimed by any other philosophical school, although its origins may be found in the words of Hume, according to which reason is considered the servant of human passions, and limits the value of knowledge to its practical aspect.

The fundamentality of action in the mentioned sense was first presented by the American Charles Peirce, and then was developed into a philosophical propensity by William James, a propensity which found adherents in America and Europe.

James, who called his way radical empiricism, differed with other empiricists about how to determine the realm of experience. In addition to outward sensory experience, he included psychological and religious experience. He considered religious beliefs, especially the belief in the power and mercy of God, to be useful for mental health, and for this very reason, true.

He himself suffered a mental breakdown at the age of twenty-nine, was cured due to his attention to God, and His Mercy and Power to change man's destiny. For this reason, he emphasized prayer and supplication, but he did not consider God to be absolutely perfect and infinite, but rather, he imagined that there was also progress for God, and that basically, the lack of progress is equal to stagnation and is a sign of imperfection.

The root of this extreme and aggressive progressivism can be found in some of the words of Hegel, including his introduction to The Phenomenology of Mind, but more than any, Bergson and Whitehead recently emphasized it. William James emphasized free will and its creative role, and in this respect he was of like mind with the existentialists.

A Brief Comparison

With this brief glance at the course of man's philosophical thought, in addition to becoming acquainted with a short history of philosophy, it has also become clear how after the Renaissance Western philosophy has gone through ups and downs, and how tortuous has been its course, and at the present time it is shaking with contradictions.

Although from time to time subtle discoveries are made by some of the philosophers of those lands, and very precise problems are posed, especially regarding knowledge, and likewise, although enlightening flashes shine from some intellects and hearts, no stable and powerful philosophical system has been brought about.

Illuminating intellectual points have not been able to design a well-founded straight line for thinkers, but rather disorders and disturbances have always and continue to govern over the philosophical atmosphere of the West.

This is different from the state that has governed Islamic philosophy. For Islamic philosophy has always followed a straight and thriving way, and with the existence of tendencies which from time to time have appeared, it has never deviated from its main course, and various subordinate tendencies are like the branches of a tree which grow in different directions and have added to its growth and flourishing.

It is hoped that this progressive course with the efforts of religious thinkers will continue in this way so that the other dark environs may be enlightened by the illuminating rays of its light to release lives from aimless wanderings.

1. Earlier this sort of philosophy was proposed by Saint Simon, and the roots of this thinking may be found in Kant.

Lesson 4: The Technical Meanings of Science and Philosophy

Introduction

In the first lesson it was indicated that the expression "philosophy" was applied from the beginning as a general term for all the true sciences (as opposed to conventional sciences), and in the second lesson we indicated that in the Middle Ages the realm of philosophy was extended to include some of the conventional sciences such as literature and rhetoric.

In the third lesson we learned that the positivists set scientific knowledge in opposition to philosophical and metaphysical knowledge, and they considered only the empirical science to be worthy of the name “scientific”.

According to the first meaning, which was also prevalent in the Islamic period, philosophy has various divisions, each of which is called a special science, and naturally there was no conflict between science and philosophy. However, the second meaning appeared in Europe during the Middle Ages, and was abandoned by the end of that period.

According to the third meaning, which is presently current in the West, philosophy and metaphysics are set in opposition to science. Since this meaning also has gained currency to some extent in Eastern countries, it is necessary to explain something about science, philosophy and metaphysics and the relations among them. Additionally, the divisions of the sciences and their classification will be mentioned.

After the treatment of this topic, we will remark on some especially important points about equivocation, differences in meaning and the technical meanings of a word, neglect of which is a cause of much confusion and fallacy.

Homonymity

In all languages (as far as it is known), words can be found each of which has a literal meaning, a commonly accepted meaning and a technical meaning. This is called homonymity, ishtirak al–lafzi. For example, in Farsi, the term dush has the meaning of ‘last night’, ‘shoulder’ and ‘shower’, and the term shir is used for ‘lion’, ‘milk’ and ‘faucet’.

The existence of homonymity plays an important role in literature and poetry, but in science, and particularly in philosophy, it brings about many difficulties, especially since the different meanings for a word are often so close to each other that distinguishing them becomes difficult. Many errors are made due to this sort of homonymity, and occasionally even authorities fall into this trap.

For this reason, some of the great philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, obliged themselves to clarify the meanings of various terms and differences among their technical senses before engaging in precise philosophical discussion in order to prevent confusion and error. By way of example we will mention a case of homonymity which has many applications and often leads to misunderstandings, and that is the term jabr.

The literal meaning of jabr is to compensate or remove a deficiency, later is was used with the meaning of “bone setting”, and perhaps it assumed this meaning because bone setting is a way of compensating a kind of deficiency, and possibly it was first used for bone setting and later was generalized to the compensation of any sort of deficiency.

A third meaning of this word is to force or place under pressure, and perhaps it assumed this meaning as a result of generalization of a requirement of bone setting, that is, since bone setting usually requires that the broken member be placed under pressure in order that the bone may be fit together, this meaning was generalized to include any pressure exerted by someone on another which forces the other to do something involuntarily.

Perhaps this was first used for cases of physical pressure and then for cases of mental pressure, and finally this concept was expanded to include any sort of feeling of pressure, even when not brought about by another person.

Up to this point we have reviewed the concept of jabr from the perspective of its literal and commonly accepted meanings. Now we should introduce the technical meaning of this expression in science and philosophy.

One of the scientific meanings of jabr is that which is used in mathematics, that is, a kind of calculation in which instead of numerals letters are used, and perhaps this meaning was coined because in algebraic calculations positive and negative quantities compensate each other, or because the unknown quantity on one side of an equation becomes known by attending to the other side or by transferring its members, which is a kind of compensating.

Another technical meaning is related to psychology, which is used as the opposite of free will. Similar to this is the problem of 'free will and determinism' which is studied in theology. This term is also used in ethics, law and fiqh, the explanation of which would take too long.

Since the distant past the concept of jabr (as opposed to free will) has been confused with certainty, necessity and philosophical necessity (wujub falsafi). In reality, the term was mistakenly used for certainty and necessity, as in foreign languages "determinism" is viewed as equivalent to it.

In conclusion, the illusion is created that every case in which the necessity of cause and effect is accepted, there cannot be free will, and conversely, the denial of necessity and certainty are taken to imply free will. The effect of this illusion on several philosophical problems is manifest, among which is that the [early] theologians denied causal necessity in the case of voluntary agents, and following this, they accursed philosophers of failing to consider God the Exalted as voluntary.

On the other hand, the jabriyyun (determinists) considered the existence of a certain fate as a reason for their own position, and opposing them, the Mu`tazilites, who believed in the free will of man, denied that there is a certain destiny. Although the certainty of destiny is irrelevant to jabr, in reality these disputes, which have a long history, occurred because of confusion between the concept of jabr and that of necessity.

Another unfortunate example is that some physicists have raised doubts about or denied causal necessity in the case of some phenomena of microphysics, and opposing them, some Western theists

have attempted to prove the existence of the Will of God on the basis of the denial of necessity for these phenomena, imagining that the denial of necessity and rejection of determinism in these cases would imply the proof a free power.

In conclusion, the existence of homonymity, especially in cases, in which the meanings are near to or similar to one another, brings about problems in philosophical discussions. These difficulties are redoubled when in a single science a term has many technical meanings, as in the case of the expression'intellect' ('aql) in philosophy, and the terms 'essential' (dhati) and 'accidental' ('aradhi) in logic. Therefore, the need to explain meanings and to determine the intended meaning in every discussion is clear.

The Technical Meaning of "Science"

Among the expressions which have various and confusing applications is the term 'ilm (science, knowledge). The literal meaning of this word and of its synonyms in other languages, such as danesh and danestan in Farsi, are clear and require no explanation; but 'ilm has various technical meanings, among which the most important are:

1. Certain belief corresponding to reality, which is the opposite of simple and compound ignorance, even if used in a single proposition.

2. The set of propositions considered to be relevant to one another, even if the propositions are singular and specific. And it is in this sense that 'ilm is also applied to the science of history (knowing specific historical events), the science of geography (knowing the specific conditions of different areas on the globe), the science of rijal [the study of the transmitters of hadiths] and biography.

3. The set of universal propositions which are considered pivotal in some field, each of which is applicable to numerous instances, even if these propositions are conventional, and it is in this sense that 'ilm is applied to conventional as opposed to 'real' (haqiqi) sciences, such as vocabulary and grammar. However, singular and specific propositions, such as those mentioned above, are not considered 'ilm in this sense.

4. The set of universal 'real' (haqiqi) (i.e. not conventional) propositions which are pivotal in some field. This sense includes all the theoretical and practical sciences, including theology and metaphysics, but it does not apply to singular and conventional propositions.

5. The set of real propositions which can be justified by sense experience. This is the very sense in which the positivists employ the term, and on this basis the non-empirical sciences and learning are not considered to be 'ilm (science).

The restriction of the expression 'science' ('ilm) to the empirical sciences is not a matter of controversy as far as this merely concerns the coining of terms and fixing terminology, however, the fixing of this

term by the positivists is based on the particular view of those who imagine that the scope of certain and real human knowledge is limited to sensible and empirical things.

They consider thinking which goes beyond this to be meaningless and fruitless. However, unfortunately, this sense has come to prevail across the surface of the earth, according to which science is set in opposition to philosophy.

The scope of certain knowledge, the refutation of positivism and the proof that there is real knowledge beyond the realm of sense and experience shall be postponed until the discussion of epistemology. We next turn to the explanation of the concept of philosophy and metaphysics.

The Technical Meaning of "Philosophy"

Thus far we have become acquainted with three technical meanings of philosophy: the first meaning includes all of the real sciences; the second meaning additionally includes some of the conventional sciences; the third meaning is specific to non-empirical knowledge and is used for the opposite of science (in the sense of empirical knowledge).

In this sense, philosophy includes logic, epistemology, ontology (metaphysics), theology, theoretical psychology (as opposed to empirical psychology), aesthetics, ethics and politics, even if in this area there are more or less differences of opinion and sometimes it is employed only for first philosophy or metaphysics, and this may be considered a fourth technical meaning of "philosophy".[1]

The expression "philosophy" also has other technical uses, which usually occur modified by an adjective or a genitive construction, as in "scientific philosophy" and "the philosophy of the sciences".

Scientific Philosophy

This expression is also used in various ways.

A. Positivism: Auguste Compte, after condemning philosophical thought and metaphysics and denying universal rational principles, divided the basic positive sciences into six fundamental branches, each of which has its own characteristic laws, as follows: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology.

He wrote a book called Course of Positive Philosophy in six volumes, and he treated the totality of the sixfold science in accordance with his so-called positive method. He devoted three volumes of the set to sociology, even though the basis of this positive philosophy lies in some dogmatic non-positive claims.

In any case, the content of this book, which is in fact program for the investigation of the sciences and especially the social sciences, is called positive philosophy, or scientific philosophy.

B. Dialectical Materialism. Marxists, contrary to positivists, emphasized the necessity of philosophy and the existence of universal laws. However, they hold that these laws are obtained from the generalization of the laws of the empirical sciences, not from rational and metaphysical thought.

Hence, they called the philosophy of dialectical materialism “scientific philosophy”, for, according to their own claims, it is obtained from the achievements of the empirical sciences, even if it is no more scientific than the philosophy of positivism.

Basically, scientific philosophy (if “scientific” is taken to mean “empirical”) is an oxymoron, such as “a clean shaven man with a beard”, and in comparative discussions, their claims have been subject to criticism.

C. Another sense of scientific philosophy is synonymous to “methodology”. It is clear that every science depending on its sort of problems requires its own specific methods of research and verification.

For example, the problems of history cannot be solved in the laboratory by means of the analysis and synthesis of various elements, and likewise, no philosopher can establish the year in which Napoleon attacked Russia or whether he was victorious or defeated by means of philosophical and mental analysis and inference.

These sorts of problems are to be solved by means of review of the relevant documents and the evaluation of their validity.In general, science in the general sense may be divided in to three types according to the methods of research and inquiry used for solving their problems: intellectual sciences, empirical sciences, and narrative and historical sciences.

A science by the name of ‘methodology’ has appeared in order to review the kinds and levels of the sciences and to determine the general and specific methods of each of the three types of science, which is occasionally called scientific philosophy, as it is also sometimes called practical logic.

1. Cf. Falsafah ‘Umumi ya Ma ba‘d al-Tabi‘ah, the Farsi translation of Paul Foulquie, Traité élémentaire de philosophie, (Paris: 1951), Vol. 3, Métaphysique, Ch. 6, "The Fundamental Problems of Metaphysics"; Khulasah-ye Falsafah.

Lesson 5: Philosophy And The Sciences

The Philosophy of the Sciences

In the previous lesson we mentioned that sometimes the term “philosophy” is used in genitive constructions such as “philosophy of morals”, “philosophy of law”, etc..

We shall now explain this sort of usage.

This sort of expression is sometimes used by those who restrict the term “science” to the empirical sciences, and who use the term “philosophy” for fields of the human sciences which are not susceptible to proof by sensory experience.

Instead of saying, “the science of theology”, for example, such people say “the philosophy of theology”, that is, the use of “philosophy” in the genetic construction is merely for the sake of indicating the kind of matter under discussion and its topics.

Likewise, those who consider problems which are both scientific and evaluative to be “unscientific”, and who hold that there is no objective basis in reality for them but consider them to be merely governed by the desires and inclinations of people, sometimes consider these sorts of problems to belong to the realm of philosophy.

So, for example, instead of speaking of the “science of morals” they say, “the philosophy of morals”, and instead of speaking of “the science of politics” they say, “the philosophy of politics”. Sometimes this sort of expression is used in another sense, and that is to explain the principles of other sciences.

In addition, matters such as the history, founders, goals, methods of research, and the course of development of a science are also discussed under this rubric. This sort of expression is not peculiar to the positivists and those of like mind to them, but those who consider philosophical and evaluative knowledge to be “science” and who consider their methods of research and inquiry to be “scientific”, also use this sort of expression.

Sometimes, in order to avoid confusion with the previous usage, they add the word “science” to the genetic construction. For example, they say, “the philosophy of the science of history” in contrast to “the philosophy of history”, or they say, “the philosophy of the science of morals” in contrast to “the philosophy of morals” in the previous sense.

Metaphysics

One of the terms which are used in contrast to “science” is the term “metaphysics”. Hence, it is necessary to explain something about this word. This term is derived from the Greek metataphysica by dropping the extra ta and transforming the physica to “physics”, to take the form “metaphysics”. It has been translated into Arabic as ma ba‘d al-tabi‘ah (that which is after physics).

According to that which has been narrated by the historians of philosophy, this word was first used as a name for one of the books of Aristotle, which occurred following his Physics, and which included general discussions of existence. In the Islamic Age this came to be called umur ‘ammah (general affairs), and some of the Islamic philosophers have considered it suitable to use the expression ma qabl al-tabi‘ah (that which is prior to physics).

Apparently, this discussion is different from that of theology or uthulujiyyah. But in the books of the

Islamic philosophers, these discussions are combined, and together they are given the name “divinity in the general sense”. Likewise, theology is specified by the name “divinity in the specific sense”.

Some have taken the term metaphysics to be equivalent to “trans-physical”, meaning that which is beyond physics, and they consider the use of this name for this part of ancient philosophy to be an instance of using a general name for something more specific, for in divinity, in the general sense, God and abstract things (beyond physics) are also discussed. However, it seems that the first meaning is the correct one.

In any case, metaphysics is used for a collection of theoretical intellectual problems, which are a part of philosophy (in the general sense). Nowadays, the term philosophy is sometimes restricted to these problems, and one of the new meanings of “philosophy” is metaphysics.

The reason that the positivists considered these kinds of problems to be unscientific, is that they are susceptible to verification by sensory experience. Likewise, Kant considered theoretical reason to be insufficient for the verification of these problems and he called them “dialectical” or debatable from two standpoints.

Science, Philosophy, Metaphysics and the Relations among them

Keeping in mind the different meanings mentioned for science and philosophy, it becomes clear that the relation among science, philosophy and metaphysics differs in accordance with these different meanings. If “science” is used for awareness, in an unqualified sense, or if it is used for a group of related propositions, it becomes more general than philosophy, for it would then include particular propositions and the conventional sciences.

If it is used in the sense of real universal propositions, it becomes equivalent to philosophy in its ancient sense. If it is used in the sense of empirical propositions, it becomes more specific than philosophy in the ancient sense, and it contradicts the modern meaning of philosophy (i.e., the set of nonempirical propositions). Likewise, metaphysics is a part of philosophy in the ancient sense, and is equivalent to it in one of its modern meanings.

It should be noted that the contrast between science and philosophy in the modern sense, as is intended by the positivists and those similar to them, is used to denigrate the value of philosophical problems and to deny the nobility and station of reason and the value of intellectual understanding, while this is not correct.

In discussions of epistemology it will be made clear that the value of intellectual understanding is not merely any less than that of sensory and experiential knowledge, but is even of an even higher level than these. Even the value of experiential knowledge itself will be found to be due to the value of

intellectual understanding and philosophical propositions.

Therefore, the restriction of the term science for empirical knowledge and the term philosophy to that which is non-empirical is acceptable if merely a matter of terminology, but one must not misuse the contrast between these terms to pretend that the problems of philosophy and metaphysics are just idle speculation.

Likewise, the label “scientific” does not establish any advantage for any sort of philosophical tendency, and basically, this label is like a patch which does not match the fabric of philosophy, and it can be considered a sign of the ignorance and demagoguery of those who affix it.

The claim that the principles of a philosophy such as those of dialectical materialism are obtained from empirical laws is wrong, for the laws of no science are generalizable to any other science, let alone to all of existence. For example, the laws of psychology and biology cannot be generalized to physics or chemistry or mathematics, and vice versa. The laws of these sciences have no use outside their own realms.

The Division and Classification of the Sciences

The question will be posed here concerning what basically is the motivation for the separation of the science from one another. The answer is that recognizable problems form a broad spectrum, and although within this spectrum some problems have a close relation to one another, others are completely alien to one another.

On the other hand, the acquisition of some kinds of knowledge is dependent on that of others, and at least the understanding of one kind may help in the understanding of another, while for other sorts of knowledge this sort of relation does not exist. With regard to the fact that the acquisition of all the kinds of knowledge is impossible for a student and assuming that it would be feasible, not all people have the motivation for it.

Likewise, the talents and tastes of individuals with regard to the acquisition to different sorts of subjects are different, and given that some sorts of knowledge are related to one another and that the acquisition of some are dependent on others, for this reason, teachers since long ago have decided to classify appropriately related topics together, and to so determine the specific sciences and types of knowledge.

Different sciences are categorized and the need of each science for others is clarified, and consequently their relative priorities are determined so that, firstly, one who has a specific talent and taste will be able to find that which he seeks from among the masses of innumerable problems and he may find the way to reach his goal.

Secondly, one who would acquire a different field of knowledge should be able to find where to begin, so that the way may be prepared for knowledge of this other field and to facilitate its acquisition.

In this way, the sciences have been divided into various parts, and each part, in turn, has been placed in a specific category and level, which include a general division into the theoretical and practical sciences, and the theoretical sciences are divided into the natural sciences, mathematics and divinity, while the practical sciences are divided into ethics, household economics and politics, which were mentioned before.

The Standard for Distinguishing among the Sciences

Now that the necessity for classifying the sciences has become clear, another question may be posed. What are the criteria and standards for the categorization of the sciences and for distinguishing among them?

The answer is that the sciences may be classified according to various standards, the most important of which are:

1. According to the methods and procedures of research. Earlier we indicated that all problems cannot be the object of study and research by a single method, and we also indicated that all sciences, with regard to their general methods of inquiry, can be divided into three groups:

A. The rational sciences, which may be investigated by means of rational proofs and mental inferences alone, as with logic and divine philosophy.

B. The empirical sciences, which are verifiable by empirical methods, such as physics, chemistry and biology.

C. Narrative sciences, which can be investigated on the basis of narrated and historical documentation, such as history, biography (`ilm al-rijal) and Islamic jurisprudence (`ilm al-fiqh).

2. According to the goal and telos. Another standard on the basis of which the sciences may be classified is the benefits and consequences which result from them. These are the goals and ends which the student takes into consideration when learning them, such as material and spiritual goals, or individual and social goals.

It is obvious that one who desires to find the way for the realization of his own spiritual perfection needs to study various matters which are not needed by one who is interested in obtaining wealth through agriculture or industry. Likewise, a leader of society needs another kind of knowledge. Hence, the sciences may be classified in accordance with these various goals.

3. According to the subject matter. The third standard according to which the sciences may be distinguished and separated is their subject matter. With regard to the fact that every problem has a subject, and a number of problems are collected under an inclusive topic, this inclusive topic may serve as that about which the various subordinate questions pivot, as numbers are the subject of arithmetic,

volume (continuous quantities) is the subject of geometry and the human body is the subject of the science of medicine.

The classification of the sciences in accordance with their subject matters provides a better way to secure the goal and motivation for separating the sciences since by using this method the internal relations and harmony among problems and their order and arrangement is better preserved.

For this reason, since long ago it has been noted by great philosophers and scientists. However, in subdivisions other standards may be taken into consideration. For example, one may establish a science called theology, whose problems turn about the subject of God the Almighty. Then it may be subdivided into branches which are philosophical, gnostic, or religious, each of which may be investigated by a specific procedure.

In reality, the standard for this subdivision would be the method of research. In the same way, the subject of mathematics may be divided into various branches each of which may be indicated on the basis of a specific goal, such as the mathematics of physics and the mathematics of economics. In this way, the composition of different standards is brought about.

Whole and Universal

The inclusive topic which is taken into consideration for the subjects of a problem and on the basis of which science appears with the meaning of a collection of related problems, sometimes is a universal topic and has many individual instances, and sometimes it takes the form of a whole and has numerous parts.

An example of the first kind is the topic of number or amount, which has various types and classes each of which is composed of the subject of a specific problem. An example of the second kind is the body of man which has numerous organs, limbs and parts, each of which is the subject of a section of the science of medicine.

The basic difference between these two sorts of subjects is that in the first kind, the topic of the subject of the science is applied individually to the subjects of its problems which are its particulars, as opposed to the second sort in which the topic of the subject is not applied individually to the subjects of the problems, but rather is predicated to the collection of parts.

The Branches of the Sciences

From what has already been explained, it has been found that the classification of the sciences is for the sake of facilitating teaching, and to fulfill the aims of education to the extent possible. In the beginning when human knowledge was limited it was possible to classify all of it into a few groups.

For example, it was possible to consider zoology to be a single science and it would even include

problems related to man. However, gradually when the circle of problems expanded, especially after various scientific instruments were made for the investigation of empirical problems, the empirical sciences more than others, were divided into various branches, and every science was divided into more particular sciences. This process is still increasing.

In general, the subdivision of the sciences takes several forms:

1. One form is that in which the small parts are taken from the subject as a whole, and each part becomes the subject of a new branch taken from the mother science, as endocrinology and genetics. It is clear that this kind of division is specified to sciences in which the relation between the subject of the science and the subject of the problems is the relation between a whole and its parts.

2. Another form is that in which more particular types and more limited classes are taken from the universal topic, as entomology and bacteriology. This sort of subdivision occurs in sciences in which the relation between the subject of the science and the subject of the problems is that between universal and particular, not between a whole and its parts.

3. Another form is that in which the various methods of research are considered a secondary criteria and while retaining the unity of the subject, new branches appear. This occurs in cases in which the problems of a science may be investigated and solved in different ways, as in philosophical theology, mystical theology and religious theology.

4. Another form is that in which different goal may be considered as subcriteria and problems appropriate to each goal are introduced as a specific branch of the mother science, as was mentioned in the case of mathematics.

Lesson 6: What is Philosophy?

The Relation between Subjects and Problems

We have thus far become acquainted with various philosophical terms, and now it is time to clarify the subject of discussion of this book, and to explain what we mean by philosophy and what problems are to be discussed in this book. Before defining philosophy and giving a brief introduction to its problems, it is good to provide some further explanation about “subject”, “problem” and “principles” of the sciences and the relations among them.

In the previous lessons we said that the term “science” according to four of the five mentioned meanings is applied to a collection of propositions which are considered to be interrelated. Furthermore, it became

clear that different relations distinguish the separate sciences.

It has also become evident that the best relation among different problems to be considered as a standard for distinguishing among the sciences is the relevance among their subjects, that is, the problems whose subjects comprise the parts of a whole or the particulars of a universal take the form of a single science.

Therefore, the problems of a science consist of propositions whose subjects are under the umbrella of an inclusive topic (whole or universal). The subject of a science is that very inclusive topic which embraces the subjects of its problems.

Here we had better mention that it is possible for a topic to be the subject of two or more sciences, and that the differences among them may be due to their goals or methods of research. However, another point must not be overlooked, which is that sometimes a topic which is considered for the subject of a science is not absolutely the subject of that science, and in reality it has a specific restriction, and the differences among these restrictions for a single subject causes the appearance of several sciences and the differences among them.

For example, “matter”, with regard to its internal composition and characteristics related to synthesis and analysis of elements becomes the subject of the science of chemistry, and with regard to its outward changes and the characteristics appropriate to them it becomes the subject of the science of physics.

Another example is “word”, which with regard to changes which occur in its construction becomes the subject of the science of morphology, and with regard to the changes in inflection it becomes the subject of the science of syntax.

Therefore, one should be careful about whether the inclusive topic is the subject of a certain science absolutely, or with specific restrictions and qualifications. How often an inclusive topic becomes the subject of a general science absolutely, and then with the addition of restrictions it takes the form of subjects for specific sciences.

For example, in the well known classification of philosophy according to the ancients, body is the subject of all the natural sciences, and by adding restrictions it takes the form of the subjects of mineralogy, botany and zoology, etc. Regarding the quality of the branches of the sciences, it was indicated that some divisions are obtained by restricting the scope of a subject and by adding qualifications to the topic of the mother subject.

Among the possible qualifications to add to the topic of the subject is “the restriction of absoluteness” (qayd itlaq), which means that in that science principles are discussed which are proved for the essence of the subject generally, or absolutely, without considering any specific characteristics.

In conclusion, it is to include all individuals of the subject. For example, the principles and qualifications

are established for body in general, absolutely, whether mineral or organic, whether vegetable or animal or human. In this way one can determine the subject to be “absolute body”, and this sort of problem may be further specified to specific sciences.

The sages have thus specified the first section of physics to cover such principles with the names sama‘ tabi‘i (elementary general physics) and sama‘ al-kiyan (elementary general astronomy), then they specified the groups of bodies for specific sciences such as cosmology, mineralogy, botany and zoology.

This same work can be done for more particular subdivisions of the sciences. For example, the problems related to all animals can be taken as a specific science whose subject is the animal, absolutely, or animal qua animal. Then specific principles may be discussed for each kind of animal in other more specialized sciences.

In this way, body in general makes up the subject matter for the section of ancient philosophy called natural science, and absolute body makes up the subject of the first part of physics sama‘ tabi‘i (elementary general physics). Each of the specific bodies, such as the cosmic bodies, the mineral bodies and living bodies make up the subjects of cosmology, mineralogy and biology.

In the same way, living body in general makes up the subject of the science of general biology, and absolute living body makes up the subject of a science which discusses the principles of all living existents, and the kinds of living existents form the subjects of the particular branches of biology.

Here a question may be posed as to if a principle is common among several kinds of universal subjects, but does not include all of them, in which science should such principles be investigated? For example, if something is common among several kinds of living existents, it cannot be considered an accidental property of living body absolutely, for it does not include all living existents, but on the other hand, to abandon it to any of the relevant particular sciences would be repetitive. So, where must it be placed?

The answer is that usually this sort of problem is also discussed in a science whose subject of discussion is absolute, and the principles of absolute subjects (‘awaridh dhatiyah, essential accidents) are defined as follows: a principle which is established for the essence of the subject before being modified by the qualifications of the particular sciences.

Really, the looseness of this definition is preferable to the repetition of the problem. As in the case of first philosophy or metaphysics, some philosophers have said that in it precepts and accidents are discussed which are established for an absolute existent (or an existent qua existent), prior to being qualified by the qualification of ‘natural’ or ‘mathematical’.

The Principles of the Sciences and their Relationships with

Subjects and Problems

We have found that in each science a series of appropriately related propositions and in reality, the proximate aim and motivation for learning and teaching that science are to analyze those propositions that are to prove that their predicates are true of their subjects. So, in every science it is assumed that a subject exists, and that predicates may be proved true of parts or individuals of this subject.

Therefore, before dealing with the presentation and analysis of the problems of any science, one needs to have prior knowledge of a series of things:

1. Knowledge of the whatness and concept of the subject.

2. Knowledge of the existence of the subject.

3. Knowledge of principles by means of which the problems of that science are solved.

Such knowledge is sometimes self evident and without need of exposition or acquisition, in which case there would be no difficulty. But sometimes this knowledge is not self evident and needs exposition and proof. For example, it is possible that the existence of a subject (such as the spirit of man) is a matter of controversy, and it is considered possible that it is a fantasy and unreal, and in such a case its real existence must be proven.

Likewise, it is possible for there to be some doubt about the principles on the basis of which the problems of a science are solved, and so it is necessary that these principles are first proven, otherwise the conclusions which are derived from them will not have scientific value and certainty.

These sorts of matters are called “the principles of the sciences” (mabadi ‘ulum), and they are divided into conceptual (tasawwur i) principles and assertive (tasdiqi) principles.

The conceptual principles which consist of the definitions and expositions of the whatnesses of the things under discussion are usually presented in the science itself in the form of an introduction. However, the assertive principles of a science are different. Often they are discussed in other sciences.

As was previously indicated, the philosophy of each science is really another science which undertakes the explanation and establishment of the principles of that science. Finally, the most general principles of the sciences are discussed and investigated in first philosophy or metaphysics.

Among them, one may mention the “principle of causality” which is relied upon by the scholars of all the empirical sciences. Basically, scientific research is done with the prior acceptance of this principle, for this research revolves around the discovery of causal relations among phenomena, but this principle itself is not provable in any empirical science, and the discussion of this principle takes place in philosophy.

The Subjects and Problems of Philosophy

From what has been said it follows that the best way to define a science is by specifying its subject, and if it has restrictions, they should be subject to exact attention. Then the problems of that science may be introduced as propositions which revolve about the above mentioned subjects.

On the other hand, the specification of a subject and its qualifications depends on determining the problems which are intended for the exposition of a science, that is, it is to a certain extent dependent on convention and agreement. For example, if we consider the topic “existent”, which is the most general concept for a real thing, we will see that all the subjects of real problems come under its umbrella.

If we consider the subject of science, it will include all the problems of the real sciences, and this science is philosophy itself, in the sense of the ancients. The presentation of such an inclusive science is not compatible with the aims of the classification of the sciences. There is no choice but to consider the subjects in a more limited way in order to fulfill the mentioned goals.

The ancient teachers first considered two groups of theoretical problems each of which revolved about its own specific set of issues. One group of them was called physics and the other was called mathematics. Then each of these was divided into more particular sciences. A third group of theoretical problems about God also could be presented, and it is called theology (ma‘rifat al-rububiyyah). However, another group of theoretical intellectual problems remains, whose subjects go beyond those already mentioned, and it is not specified to any particular subject.

It seems that for these problems they did not find any particular name to be appropriate, and since it was discussed after physics it was called metaphysics (ma ba‘d al-tabi‘ah). The position of these problems in relation to the other problems of the theoretical sciences is the same as the position of elementary physics with relation to the natural sciences, and just as the subject of the former is “the absolute body”, the subject of metaphysics is “the absolute existent” or “the existent qua existent”, so that only problems which are not specified to the subjects of any particular science are presented under it, although these problems (of metaphysics) do not include all existents.

In this way the specific science called metaphysics came to exist, and later was called “the universal science” (‘ilm kulli) or “first philosophy” (falsafah ula). As we previously indicated, during the Islamic era the problems of metaphysics were assimilated to the problems of theology and was called divinity in the general sense (ilahiyyat bi al-ma`na al-a‘m).

Occasionally other problems, such as those of resurrection and the means to man’s eternal felicity, and even some problems concerning prophecy and imamate also are appended to it, as is seen in the section on divinity in (Ibn Sina ’s) Shifa‘. If all of these problems are considered to be the main problems of one science, and none of them are impositions or digressions, then the subject of this science would have to be considered very broadly.

The determination of a single subject for such various problems would be no easy task. For the same reason, various attempts have been made to determine the subject and to explain that all of these predicates are essential properties (awaridh dhatiyyah) of it, though it has not been very successful.

Anyway, there are three alternatives: either, theoretical problems other than physics and mathematics may be considered as a single science with a single affected subject, or the standards and criteria of their coherence and unity is to be taken as the unity of their aims and ends, or every group of problems which has a specific subject is to be taken as a specific science, including the universal problems of existence, which are discussed under “first philosophy”, according to one of the specific senses of “philosophy”.

It seems that this last is the most suitable of the alternatives, and that therefore the various problems in Islamic philosophy which are presented as philosophy and hikmat, are considered to be several specific sciences.

In other words, we will have a series of philosophical sciences all of which share a rational method, but we will apply the term absolute philosophy to “first philosophy”, and the main purpose of this book is to present the problems of first philosophy. However, since their solutions depend on the problems of knowledge, we must first present epistemology and then we may review the problems of ontology and metaphysics.

The Definition of Philosophy

Considering that philosophy is equivalent to first philosophy or metaphysics, and its subject is the absolute existent (not the existent absolutely), we can define it as follows: a science which discusses the states of the absolute existent; or a science which addresses the general states of existence; or a set of propositions and problems regarding the existent in so far as it is an existent.

Several characteristics of philosophy have been mentioned, among the most important of which are the following.

1. Contrary to the empirical and narrative sciences, the method for solving the problems of philosophy is the rational method, although this method is also employed in logic, theology, philosophical psychology and some other sciences such as ethics, and even in mathematics. Therefore, this method is not particular to first philosophy.

2. Philosophy undertakes to prove the assertions which are the principles of the other sciences, and this is one of the ways in which the other sciences stand in need of philosophy. Hence, philosophy is called the mother of the sciences.

3. In philosophy a criterion is obtained for distinguishing true states of affairs from imaginary and spurious ones, and hence, the main purpose of philosophy is sometimes considered to be knowledge of

true states of affairs and the distinction of them from illusion, but it is better to consider this as the purpose of epistemology.

4. The characteristic of philosophical concepts is that they are not obtained from the senses or experience, such as the concepts of cause and effect, necessary and contingent, material and immaterial. These concepts are technically called philosophical secondary intelligibles, and they are explained in the section on epistemology.

In view of these characteristics one can find out why philosophical problems only can be proved by the rational method, and why philosophical laws are not obtained by way of generalizing from the laws of the empirical sciences.

Lesson 7: The Position of Philosophy

The Essence of the Problems of Philosophy

In the previous lesson a definition of philosophy was presented, and it was concluded in brief that this science discusses the general states of existence. However, this is not sufficient to discover the essence of philosophical problems.

Of course, the exact understanding of these problems is achieved when they are in practice investigated in detail, and naturally, the more deeply one delves into them and comprehends them, the better one will know the truth about them. However, before beginning, if we are able to obtain a clearer view of the problems of philosophy, we will be better able to understand the benefits of philosophy; we will proceed with more insight and vision and with increased eagerness and interest.

For this purpose, we begin by mentioning some examples of other problems of the philosophical sciences, indicated the difference between them and the problems of other sciences. Finally, we will deal with the explanation of the essence of first philosophy and the characteristics of its problems.

For every man, this basic and vital question is presented: Is his life ended with death, and after it is there nothing left but the decayed parts of his body, or is there a life after death?

It is clear that the answer to this question cannot be obtained from any of the empirical sciences such as physics, chemistry, geology, botany, biology, and others like them. Likewise the calculations of mathematics and the equations of algebra contain no answers to these questions.

Hence, another science is needed to investigate these and similar problems with its own methodology, and to clarify whether man is merely this physical body or whether he has another reality which cannot

be sensed called the spirit. On the hypothesis that there is a spirit, is it able to persist after death or not?

It is obvious that the investigation of this sort of problem is not possible by the methods of the empirical sciences. Rather, one should use rational methods to solve such problems. Naturally, another science is needed to investigate such nonempirical problems. This is ‘ilm al-nafs, or philosophical psychology.

Likewise, other problems, such as those of the will, and volition which are the basis of human responsibility, must be established in this science. The existence of such a science and the value of the ways of solving problems presented in it depend upon the proof of the existence of the reason and the value of rational knowledge.

Therefore, another science is needed to investigate the sorts of knowledge and to evaluate them until it becomes known what intellectual perceptions are, and what value they may have, and what problems they can solve. This is also another philosophical science called epistemology.

Regarding the practical sciences, such as morals and politics, there are also basic and important problems which the empirical sciences cannot solve, including the recognition of the truth of moral good and evil, virtue and vice, and the standards for determining and distinguishing praiseworthy and blameworthy deeds. Inquiry into this sort of question needs a specific philosophical science or sciences, which in turn are in need of epistemology.

With more careful attention it becomes clear that these problems are interrelated, and as a whole are related to the problems of theology, the study of the God Who has created the body and spirit of man and all existents of the world; the God Who manages the cosmos with a special order; the God Who causes people to die and again will raise them to life to be rewarded or punished for their good and bad deeds, good and bad deeds which are performed with volition and free will, etc.

Knowledge of God the Almighty and His attributes and deeds form a series of problems which will be investigated in the science of theology (divinity in the specific sense). All of these problems are based on a series of more general and more universal problems, whose scope also embraces sensory and material affairs, such as the following.

Existents are in need of one another for their generation and persistence, and among them there are passive and active relations, actions and reactions, and causes and effects. All existents which are within the range of man’s sense and experience are perishable, but there must be another existent which is imperishable, and rather for which nothingness and imperfection are barred.

The arena of being is not restricted to material and sensible existents, nor is it restricted to changing, altering and moving existents, rather there are other kinds of existents which do not have these characteristics and are not in need of time and place.

The discussion about whether change, alteration, perishability and dependency are implications of being,

in other words whether there is a stable, fixed, imperishable and independent existent, is a discussion whose positive resolution leads to a classification of existents into the material and the immaterial, the stable and changing, the Necessary Existence and contingent existence, etc.

Until this sort of problem is solved, for example, until necessary existence and immaterial existences are established, sciences such as theology, philosophical psychology and the like will have no basis or foundation. It is not only the solution to such problems which requires rational argument, but if one wishes to disprove these matters this also requires the employment of rational methods, for just as sensation and experience by themselves are unable to prove these things, they are also unable to disprove or deny them.

In this way, it has become clear that there is a series of important and basic problems for man which cannot be answered by any of the specific sciences, not even by the specific philosophical sciences. There must be another science by which to inquire into them, and this is metaphysics, the general science, first philosophy whose subject is not specific to a kind of existent or determined and particular essence.

Inevitably, its subject must be the most universal concept which is applicable to all real and objective things, and this is the term “existent”. Of course, what is meant is not existent in that respect in which it is material, and not in that respect in which it is immaterial, but rather in that respect in which it is an existent, that is, the absolute existent, or existent in so far as it is an existent. Such a science has the position of being what is called “the mother of the sciences”.

The Principles of Philosophy

In the previous lesson it was said that before beginning to solve the problems of any science, one should recognize the principles of that science. So, we may now ask, “What are the principles of philosophy?” “And in what science should these be determined?”

The answer is that the recognition of the conceptual principles of the sciences, that is, the knowledge of the concept and essence of the subject of the science, and the concepts of the subjects of the problems of the science usually are obtained in that very science itself. In this way, the definition of the subject is presented in the introduction to the text, and the definitions of the particular subjects of the problems are defined in the introductions to each discussion.

However, the subject of philosophy (existent) and its concept are self-evident and in no need of definition. Therefore, philosophy has no need for these conceptual principles. However, the subjects of its problems, as in other sciences, are defined at the beginning of every discussion.

The assertive principles of the sciences are divided into two groups: one is the affirmation of the existence of the subject, and the other is the principles which are employed for the establishment and

determination of the problems of the science.

However, the existence of the subject of philosophy has no need of being established, for the principle of being is self-evident, and is undeniable by any rational person. At least every one is aware of the existence of themselves, and this suffices for knowing that the concept of “existent” has an instance.

Hence, other instances may be discussed and investigated. In this way a problem appears for philosophy about which the sophists, skeptics and idealists on the one hand, and other philosophers on the other hand have disagreed.

As for the second group of assertive principles, that is the principles which are the basis for solving problems, these are divided into two groups: one is the theoretical principles (i.e., not self-evident), which must be proved in another science, and are called the conventional principles, and as was previously indicated the most general conventional principles are established in first philosophy, that is, some of the philosophical problems are used to establish the conventional principles of other sciences.

First philosophy itself basically has no need for such conventional principles, although it is possible that in other philosophical sciences, such as theology, philosophical psychology, and ethics, principles may be employed which are established in first philosophy or in some other philosophical science, or even in an empirical science.

The second group of principles is self-evident propositions which have no need to be proven or explained, such as the proposition of the impossibility of a contradiction. The problems of first philosophy need nothing more than such principles, and these principles do not need to be proven, let alone to be proven in another science.

Therefore, first philosophy has no need for any other science, whether rational or empirical or narrative. This is one of the most important characteristics of this science, although logic and epistemology are exceptions, because the reasoning for the establishment of philosophical problems is on the basis of the principles of logic, and it is on this basis that philosophical truths are capable of being known rationally, that is, the existence of the intellect and its ability to solve the problems of philosophy be settled.

But it may be said that what is basically needed by philosophy are the self-evident principles of logic and epistemology, which cannot really be considered “problems” and to be in need of proving, and the explanation which are given of them are really explanations for admonition. Further explanation of this is to be found in Lesson eleven.

The Aim of Philosophy

The proximate and immediate aim of any science is the awareness of man of the problems which are presented in that science, and the quenching of man’s innate thirst for understanding the truth. For one of the basic human instincts is the instinct to search for the truth or unquenchable limitless curiosity.

The satisfaction of this instinct fulfills one of man's psychological needs, although this instinct is not equally active and animated in all individuals, but in no individual is it completely dormant and ineffective.

Normally every science has indirect benefits and consequences which somehow influence man's material and spiritual life and fulfills man's other natural and innate desires. For example, the natural sciences prepare the ground for the greater exploitation of nature and a better material life, and are related by a single intermediary to man's natural and animal life.

The mathematical sciences are two removes from these aims, although they may also have influence in another way on the spiritual life and human dimension of man, and this is when they are mingled with knowledge of philosophy and divinity and gnostic ('irfani) attention of the heart, and when they present them phenomena of nature in the form of effects of the power, greatness, wisdom and mercy of God.

The relation of the spiritual and human dimensions of man to the philosophical sciences is closer than the relation to the natural sciences, and, as was indicated, the natural sciences are also related to the human dimension of man with the aid of the philosophical sciences. This relation is manifested in theology and then in philosophical psychology and ethics more than in others.

For divine philosophy acquaints us with God, the Supreme, and we become aware of the attributes of beauty and majesty, which prepares the ground for our relation to the source of infinite knowledge, power and beauty.

The philosophical science of the soul ('ilm al-nafs) facilitates knowledge of the spirit and its attributes and characteristics, and makes us aware of the essence (jawhar) of humanity, and extends our vision in relation to the truth of our own selves, and leads us beyond nature and beyond the limited bounds of time and place, and it brings us to understand that man's life is not limited and restricted to narrow dark framework of worldly and material life. Ethics and morals show the general way to the adornment and trimming of the spirit and heart, and the acquisition of eternal felicity and ultimate perfection.

As was previously indicated, in order to obtain all of this valuable knowledge, the problems of epistemology and ontology must be solved. Hence, first philosophy is the key to these precious and unending treasures which promise felicity and eternal benefits. It is the blessed root of the "good tree" which produced the fruits of various spiritual and intellectual virtues and boundless spiritual and divine perfections. It plays the largest role in preparing the ground for human perfection and sublimity.

In addition to this, philosophy provides worthy help with the avoidance of satanic temptations and the rejection of materialism and atheism. It safeguards one from intellectual perversions, lapses and deviations. It provides one with undefeatable arms in the arena of the combat of ideas. It enables one to defend correct views and tendencies and to attack and charge invalid and incorrect thoughts.

Therefore, in addition to playing a positive and uniquely constructive role, philosophy also has an irreplaceable defensive and combative role. In the expansion of Islamic culture and the destruction of

anti-Islamic cultures, it is highly effective.

Lesson 8: The Method of Philosophical Inquiry

The Evaluation of the Rational Method

In the previous lessons it has been repeatedly said that philosophical problems must be investigated by the rational method, and that the empirical method is of no use in this area. However, those who have come more or less under the influence of positivist thinking imagine that this is reason for the imperfection and worthlessness of philosophical thought, because they think that the empirical method is the only sure and scientific method and that no certain conclusions can be obtained by the rational method.

On this basis, some imagine that philosophy is the infancy of the sciences and they consider it to be the duty of philosophy to present hypotheses for solving scientific problems, and even Karl Jaspers, the German existentialist philosopher, writes: “Philosophy yields no certain knowledge and as soon as knowledge is accepted by all as certain with decisive reasons, then that knowledge cannot be considered philosophical, but rather, it at once becomes transformed into scientific knowledge.”

Others who have been intimidated by Western industrial and scientific progress reason that Western scientists have achieved bewildering and daily increasing scientific progress only when they abandoned the deductive and rational methods and began to employ the inductive and empirical methods.

Evolutionary progress was especially hastened since the time of Francis Bacon, who emphasized the empirical method. This is the best reason for the superiority of the empirical method to the rational method.

Unfortunately, some of the new Muslim thinkers and imitators who accept this reason would hang a medal of honor on the chest of Muslim scholars as if they had been inspired by the Noble Qur’an to confront and challenge Greek culture and to replace the deductive and rational method by the inductive and empirical method, so that later, the influence of Islamic culture in Europe would cause the awakening of Western scientists and their awareness of this victorious method.

This fantasy has gone so far that some of the ignorant imagine that the research method which is presented by the Noble Qur’an for solving all problems is none other than the empirical and positivist method. They even imagine that the problems of theology, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and morals must be investigated by this method.

Of course, it should come as no surprise that those whose eyes are fixed on that which is given by the senses, who have closed their eyes to that which is beyond sensory perception, who have denied the power of reason and rational understanding and who consider rational and metaphysical concepts to be invalid and meaningless should also deny any place for philosophy among the human sciences.

They consider it to have no role but explaining some terms current in languages, and that its dignity must be reduced to that of linguistics. They present its function to be that of offering hypotheses for the solution of the problems of the sciences.

This is most unfortunate, that someone who calls himself a Muslim, who is acquainted with the Qur'an, should relate such intellectual perversions and decadence to the Noble Qur'an. They consider this to be cause for the honor of Islam and for Muslim scholars.

Here, we do not intend to criticize positivist ideas, which are the basis of such fantasies, and in comparative discussions these will become more or less familiar. However, we consider it necessary to explain more about the rational and empirical methods so that the weaknesses of the arguments which have been made in this area become clear.

Analogy, Induction and Deduction

Attempts to discover what is unknown on the basis of what is known are of three forms:

1. Inference from particulars to another particular, that is, when two subjects are similar to one another and a judgment about one of them is known, we may infer the same judgment about the other, on the basis of the similarity which exists between the two of them. For example, if two people are similar and one of them is intelligent, we say that the other is also intelligent.

In logical terms this is called tamthil (analogy) and in the terminology of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) it is called qiyas. It is obvious that the mere similarity of two things does not imply that the common judgment about them is certain, and thus, analogy is of no use for obtaining certainty and has no scientific worth.

2. Inference from particulars to a universal, that is, when we investigate the individuals of one essence and it is found that they share a common property, we may infer that this property holds of the essence, and that it occurs in all of its instances. In logical terms this is called induction, and it is divided into two kinds: complete induction and incomplete induction.

In complete induction it is assumed that all the individuals under consideration are investigated and that their common property is observed in all of them. It is clear that in practice this is impossible, for even if all the present instances of a whatness could be investigated, there would be no way to investigate all past and future instances.

At the very least, the possibility would remain that in the past or in the future there could be instances of

that essence. Incomplete induction occurs when many of the instances of whatness are observed and a property common to them is attributed to all individuals of that essence.

But this intellectual inference will not lead to certainty, for there will always be the possibility, no matter how weak, that some of the individuals which have not been investigated lack this property. Therefore, in practice, certain and indubitable conclusions cannot be obtained by induction.

3. Inference from universals to a particular, that is, first a predicate is proved for a universal subject and on the basis of this the judgment about the particulars of that subject becomes clear. In logic this sort of intellectual inference is called qiyas (deduction), and it yields certainty under the conditions that its premises are certain and the deduction also has a valid form. Logicians have allocated an important section of classical logic to the explanation of the material and formal conditions of certain deduction, proof.

There is a famous problem which has been raised regarding deduction. If a judgment is known to hold generally, the application of that judgment to all instances of the subject will also be known. But then there would be no need for the formulation of a deductive argument. The scholars of logic have answered that a judgment for a major premise may be known in summary form, but in the conclusion it becomes known in detail.

Meditation on the problems of mathematics and the ways of solving them shows how useful deduction is, for the method of mathematics is that of deduction, and if this method were not useful, none of the problems of mathematics could be solved on the basis of mathematical principles.

A point which must be mentioned here is that in analogy and induction there is a hidden form of deduction, but nevertheless, in the cases of analogy and incomplete induction this deduction does not constitute a proof and is of no use for obtaining certainty.

If, however, this sort of hidden deduction did not exist, there could be no form of inference at all, no matter how speculative. The hidden deduction of analogy is this: this judgment is true for one of the similar objects, and every judgment which is true of one of a pair of similar objects is also true of the other.

It is to be noted that the major premise of this deduction is not certain. In incomplete induction there is a similar speculative deduction, that is, there is a suppressed major premise in it such as: “Every judgment which is proved for many individuals of a whatness is proven for all the individuals of that essence.”

Even if induction is considered valid by way of the probability calculus, it will still need deduction. Likewise, empirical propositions are in need of deduction if they are to take the form of universal propositions, as is explained in the books of logic.

It is to be concluded that reasoning about a problem always must take the form of an inference from

universal to particular, although this intellectual inference will sometimes be performed explicitly and clearly, as in logical deduction, and sometimes in a hidden form, as in analogy and induction.

Sometimes it yields certainty, as in deductive proofs and complete induction, and sometimes it does not bring certainty, as in rhetorical and polemical deductions, analogy and incomplete induction.

Rational Method and Empirical Method

As was previously mentioned, deduction brings certainty when in addition to having a valid form, and satisfies logical conditions, each of its premises is also certain. If certain propositions themselves are not self-evident, inevitably they should lead to self-evident ones that are they should be inferred from propositions which have no need of rational proof.

Logicians have divided self-evident propositions (badihiyyat) into two general groups: primary self-evident propositions and secondary self-evident propositions. One of the types of secondary self-evident propositions is considered to be "empirical" (mujarrabat), that is, propositions which are obtained by experience.

According to them the experience is not a method which is the opposite of the deductive method, and it not only includes the deductive method but it may also serve as one of the premises in another deduction. Therefore, it is not proper to equate induction and experience nor to take deduction and experience as opposites.

Of course, experience has a variety of other meanings, but this is not the proper place to discuss them. However, taking the empirical method to be the opposite of the rational method is based on considering the rational method to be limited to the deductive method where the only premises are those of pure reason.

These premises are those which are either primary self-evident propositions or are implied by them (not merely by empirical propositions), such as all of the syllogistic proofs which are employed in first philosophy, mathematics and for many of the problems of the philosophical sciences.

The difference between this and the empirical method is not that one of them employs deduction and the other induction. Rather, the difference is that the rational method is supported solely by primary self-evidence while the empirical method is supported by empirical premises, which are considered to be secondary self- evident propositions. Far from being a flaw in the rational method this is the greatest distinction of the rational method.

Conclusions

With the points which have been mentioned here in summary form, it becomes clear how weak and far from the truth are the positions mentioned [of the positivists], because:

Firstly, it is not correct to equate experience and induction.

Secondly, it is incorrect to consider the empirical method as the opposite of the deductive method.

Thirdly, neither induction nor experience is without need of deduction.

Fourthly, both the rational and empirical methods are deductive, and the distinction of the rational method is that it relies upon primary self-evident propositions, contrary to the empirical method which relies upon empirical propositions, premises whose value never reaches the level of the value of primary self-evident propositions.

It should be noted that this topic requires further explanation and investigation; and some of principles of classical logic are debatable, while we have merely indicated the materials necessary to the extent required to dispel some fantasies in this regard.

The Scope of the Rational and Empirical Methods

Despite the advantages which the rational method has over the empirical method, it is not applicable to all sciences, and likewise, the empirical method has its own specific scope and cannot be applied to philosophy and mathematics.

Of course, this division between the ranges of these methods is not conventional, but is required by the nature of the problems of the sciences. The kind of problem in the natural sciences requires that they be solved by the empirical method and from premises obtained by sensory experience, for the concepts which are used in these sciences and which make up the subjects and predicates of their propositions are those which are obtained from sensible things. Naturally, sensory experiences are also required to prove them.

For example, merely by using philosophical and rational analysis, no philosopher, no matter how much mental effort he makes, can discover that bodies are composed of molecules and atoms, or what elements must be combined to form a given chemical matter and what properties it will have, or what living existents are composed of, and under what material conditions they survive, and what things cause sickness in animals and humans, and how various diseases may be cured and treated, so this sort of problem and thousands of others like them can only be solved by the empirical method.

On the other hand, the problems which are related to immaterial things can never be solved by means of sensory experience, nor can they be denied by the empirical sciences. For example, with what sensory experience, and in what laboratory, and by means of what scientific instruments can the spirit and immaterial things be discovered or their absence be established?

Furthermore, it is the propositions of first philosophy which are composed of secondary philosophical intelligibles, that is, of concepts which are obtained by means of mental effort and rational analysis. It is

only possible to prove or disprove their relations or unity by means of reason. This sort of problem must be solved by the rational method and by reliance on rational self-evident propositions.

From this, it becomes clear how weak the position is of those who confuse the ranges of the empirical and rational methods and who try to establish the superiority of the empirical method over the rational method, and who imagine that the ancient philosophers only used the rational method, and that it is for this reason that they were unable to make successful scientific discoveries.

However, the ancients also used the empirical method in the natural sciences, and among them Aristotle, with the help of Alexander of Macedonia prepared a large garden in Athens, and grew various kinds of plants and animals there, and he himself observed their states and characteristics.

The rapid advance of modern scientists must be considered to be the result of the discovery of new scientific instruments, their endeavors to solve natural and material problems, and the focusing of their thoughts and ideas on discovery and invention, not a result of a turning of their backs on the rational method and its replacement by the empirical method.

Let it not remain unsaid that in cases in which the means and instruments of experience were insufficient for solving a given problem, the ancient philosophers tried to compensate for this deficiency by postulating hypotheses, and probably, in order to confirm or explain these hypotheses they sought the help of the rational method.

However, this was due to the immaturity of their philosophical thought and the inadequacy of their empirical instruments, not an indication of their failure to heed or underestimation of the empirical method, and this is no reason to think that the function of philosophy is to provide hypotheses and the function of science to confirm them by scientific methods.

Basically, in that period, there was no distinction between science and philosophy, and all of the empirical sciences were also considered to be parts of philosophy.

Lesson 9: The Relation between Philosophy and the Sciences

The Relations among the Sciences

Although the sciences, in the sense of collections of appropriate problems, are separated and distinguished from one another according to different criteria, such as their subjects, aims, and methods

of inquiry, they are still related to one another. Each of them is able, to some extent, to assist with the solution of the problems of another science.

As was previously indicated, mostly, the positive principles of every science are presented in another science, and the best example of the benefit given to one science by another can be found in the relation between mathematics and physics.

The relations among the philosophical sciences are also clear, and the best example of this can be found in the relation between morals and philosophical psychology, for one of the positive principles of the science of morals is the possession of will and freedom of man without which moral goodness and evil, praise and blame and reward and punishment would be meaningless.

This positive principle must be established in the philosophical psychology (`ilm al– nafs), which discusses the characteristics of the human soul by the rational method. There is more or less of a relation between the natural and philosophical sciences, as well. In order to solve some problems which are raised in the philosophical sciences, one can employ premises which are established in the empirical sciences.

For example, in empirical psychology it is demonstrated that sometimes despite the existence of necessary physical and physiological conditions for seeing and hearing, perception does not take place. Perhaps all of us have had the experience of meeting a friend but failing to see him because the focus of our mental attention was elsewhere, or a sound may have caused our eardrums to vibrate although we did not hear it.

This subject can be used for premises to solve one of the problems of the philosophical science of the soul, and it may be concluded that perception is not simply due to the category of material interaction, otherwise perception would always take place when the material conditions were satisfied.

Now the question may be raised as to whether such relations also obtain between philosophy (i.e., metaphysics) and the other sciences, or whether there is an impenetrable wall and no relation between them.

In response it must be said that there are relations between philosophy and the other sciences, although philosophy is not dependent on the other sciences, and even has no need for positive principles which are established in other sciences. On the one hand, it assists other sciences and satisfies some of their fundamental needs, while on the other hand, it benefits from the other sciences in one sense.

We shall now briefly investigate the interrelations between philosophy and the sciences in two sections.

The Assistance given by Philosophy to the Sciences

The fundamental assistance given by philosophy (i.e., metaphysics) to the other sciences, including the

philosophical and non-philosophical sciences, is confined to explaining their assertive principles, that is, the establishment [of the existence] of non-self-evident subjects and the establishment of the most general positive principles:

A. The establishment of the subject of science. We know that the problems of every science turn about a subject which includes the subjects of the problems of that science. When such the existence of such a subject is not self-evident, it needs to be established, and this establishment is not within the scope of the problems of that science, for the problems of every science are limited to propositions which represent the states and accidents of the subject, not its existence.

On the other hand, in some cases, the establishment of a subject by means of the research methods of that science is not possible. For example, the methods of the natural sciences are empirical, but the real existence of their subjects must be established by the rational method.

In such cases, it is only first philosophy which can assist these sciences and establish their subjects by rational proof. This relation between philosophy and the sciences has been considered by some authorities to be a general relation, and that all the sciences without exception are in need of philosophy for the establishment of their subjects, and some have even gone further to assert that the establishment of the existence of all things is the responsibility of metaphysics.

Every proposition which has the form of a haliyyah basitah (simple existential proposition), that is one whose predicate is "existent", such as "Man is existent," is considered to be a metaphysical proposition.

The apparent meaning of this claim, however, seems to be an exaggeration, but there is no doubt that the non-self-evident subjects of the sciences are in need of proofs which are composed of universal and metaphysical premises.

B. Establishing positive principles. As has been repeatedly indicated, the most general principles required by all the real sciences are discussed in first philosophy, and the most important of them is the principle of causality and its subordinate laws, which we explain as follows:

All scientific endeavors turn about the discovery of causal relations between things and phenomena. A scientist who spends long years of his life in the laboratory to analyze and synthesize chemicals searches to discover what elements cause the appearance of what material, and what properties and accidents will appear in it, and what factors cause the analysis of compounds, that is, what is the cause for the appearance of these phenomena?

Likewise, a scientist who sets up an experiment to discover the microbe which causes a disease and the medicine for it really is searching for the cause of that disease and its cure.

Hence, scientists, prior to beginning their scientific endeavors, believe that every phenomenon has a cause, and even Newton, who discovered the law of gravity, by observing the falling of an apple, was

blessed by this same belief. If he had imagined that the appearances of phenomena are accidental and without a cause, he would never have been able to make such a discovery.

Now the question is: In what science is this very principle which is required by physics, chemistry, medicine and other sciences to be investigated? The answer is that the investigation of this rational law is not appropriate to any science but philosophy.

Likewise, the subordinate laws of causation, such as the law that every effect has a specific and suitable cause, for example, the roaring of a lion in the jungles of Africa does not cause a man to be afflicted with cancer, and the singing of a nightingale in Europe would not cure him.

Also the explanation of these and the following laws are worthy of no science but philosophy: the law that wherever a complete cause occurs, its effect will also necessarily come into existence, and until a complete cause occurs, its effect will never be existent.

After their experiments, scientists remain in need of the principle of causality, for the immediate results of their experiments are nothing but the fact that in the cases tested specific phenomena have occurred simultaneously or following other phenomena.

The discovery of a universal law, and the claim that this cause always brings about the appearance of certain effects, requires another principle which can never be obtained by experimentation.

The correct view is that this principle is the very principle of causation, that is, a scientist can present a universal law with certainty only when he has been successful in discovering the common factor in all cases, and he has found the existence of the cause of phenomena in all the cases tested. In this way it may be said that whenever and wherever such a cause occurs, the phenomenon of its effect will come into existence.

Also, this law can be accepted in a universal form which admits no exceptions only when the law of the necessity of causation is accepted; otherwise, it may be considered possible that the existence of the complete cause does not always necessitate the appearance of its effect, or that the occurrence of the appearance of the effect is possible without the existence of its complete cause. In this way, the universality and necessity of the above mentioned law would be flawed, and its certainty would be lost.

Of course, the discussion about whether experience can discover the complete and exclusive cause of a phenomenon is another matter, but in any case, the necessity and certainty of a universal law (given that such laws can be discovered in the natural sciences by empirical methods) depends on the acceptance of the principle of causation and its corollaries.

The proof of these laws is part of the assistance given by philosophy to the sciences.

The Assistance given by the Sciences to Philosophy

The most important assistance given by the sciences to philosophy takes two forms:

A. The demonstration of the premises of some proofs. At the beginning of this lesson we indicated that sometimes in order to solve some problems of the philosophical sciences empirical premises can be used. For example, from the absence of the occurrence of perception despite the existence of material conditions the conclusion may be drawn that perception is a non-material phenomenon.

Likewise in order to establish the existence of the spirit one may employ the biological fact that the cells of the bodies of men and animals gradually die and are replaced by other cells so that during several years all the cells of the body (except the cells of the brain) are replaced, and by adding the fact that the structure of the cells of the brain also gradually change with the consumption of their contents and renewed nourishment, for individual unity and the persistence of the spirit are cases of consciousness and are undeniable.

The body, however, is constantly in a state of change. Hence, it becomes clear that the spirit is other than the body, is persistent and unchangeable. Even in some proofs of the existence of God the Exalted, such as the proof from motion and the proof from creation, in one sense, empirical premises are used.

Now, regarding this relation which exists between the natural and philosophical sciences, the relation between them and metaphysics can be established in this way, in order to solve a metaphysical problem, such as, that existence is not equivalent to matter, and that being material is not a characteristic of all of being and is not an accident of all existents.

In other words existence may be divided into the material and the non-material, for this a premise may be employed that, for example, is obtained from philosophical psychology, and its establishment, in turn, will all be accomplished with the assistance of the empirical sciences.

Also, in order to establish the fact that dependence is not an inseparable implication of being and that there is an independent existent (the Necessary Existent), the proofs from motion and from creation are used, which are based on empirical premises.

This relation between the natural sciences and philosophy does not contradict that which was explained before, that philosophy is not in need of the other sciences, for the way of establishing the mentioned facts is not limited to these kinds of proofs, and for each of them there are proofs of pure philosophy, which are composed of primary self-evident premises and those given by consciousness (propositions which refer to presentational knowledge), as will be explained in the appropriate place, God willing.

In reality, the setting forth of proofs consisting of empirical premises is for the sake of the indulgence of those whose minds are not sufficiently trained to completely understand pure philosophical proofs, which are composed of pure rational premises which are far from the mind familiar with sensory affairs.

B. Preparing new grounds for philosophical analysis. Every science begins with a number of basic and universal problems, and they develop in order to elaborate and explain specific and particular cases with the appearance of new fields which sometimes appear with the aid of other sciences.

Philosophy is no exception to this rule, and its first problems are limited, and it has developed and will develop with the appearance of wider horizons, horizons which sometimes are discovered by mental efforts and the exchange of ideas and thoughts, and sometimes through the guidance of revelation, or by gnostic disclosures, and sometimes they appear by means of things which are established in other sciences, which prepare the ground for comparison with other philosophical principles and new rational analyses, such as the problems of the truth of revelation and miracles given by religion, and other problems, such as the world of images and forms, given by the gnostics (`urafa).

These have prepared the grounds for new philosophical investigations. Likewise, the progress of empirical psychology has opened up new problems for the philosophical science of the soul.

Therefore, one of the services the sciences render to philosophy, a cause for the broadening of its vision, the widening of the range of its problems, its development and fruitfulness is to prepare new subjects for philosophical analysis and comparison with its general principles.

For example, in the modern age when the theory of the transformation of matter to energy and the composition of particles from compressed energy were presented, a problem was posed for the philosopher as to whether it is possible for something to occur in the material world which lacks the basic attributes of matter, and for example, has no volume? Is it possible for something which does have volume to be transformed into something without volume? Given that the answer to these questions is negative, it will be concluded that energy does not lack volume, despite the fact that this is not provable by sensory experience.

Likewise, when energy was introduced by some physicists as being of the same family as motion, the question arose as to whether it is possible that matter, which is assumed to have come into existence from compressed energy, to be homogeneous (ham sinkh) with motion. Is it possible for matter to lose its essential properties by being transformed into energy, or with the transformation of some atomic particles into "fields" (according to some hypotheses of modern physics)? Basically, is physical matter the same as the body discussed in philosophy? And what relations are there between physical matter and other concepts, such as force, energy and field, and the concept of body in philosophy?

It is clear that this service rendered by natural science to the philosophical sciences, especially metaphysics, does not mean that philosophy is in need of them, even if the range is broadened for philosophical activity and manifestation with the problems which are raised as an effect of the progress of the sciences.

The Relation between Philosophy and Gnosis (‘Irfan)

At the end of this lesson it is good to indicate something about the relation between philosophy and ‘irfan, and for this purpose there is no alternative but to give a brief explanation about ‘irfan.

‘Irfan literally means knowing, and in technical terms it is applied to special perceptions which are obtained through the focusing of one's attention on the interior of the soul (not by means of sensory experience nor by rational analysis), and in the process of this spiritual wayfaring (sayr wa suluk) some disclosures usually are obtained which are similar to “visions” and sometimes there is the exact presentation of something which occurred in the past, present or future, and sometimes it needs an interpretation, and sometimes it appears as an effect of being possessed by the devil.

The topics which the gnostics (‘urafa) explain as their own interpretations, disclosures and findings of conscience, are called "scientific gnosis” (‘irfan–e‘ilmi). Sometimes by adding reasonings and inferences they take the form of philosophical discussions.

There is also an interrelation between philosophy and gnosis which is investigated in the following two sections.

The Assistance given by Philosophy to Gnosis (‘Irfan)

A. Real gnosis is acquired exclusively through bondage to God and obedience to His orders. Bondage without knowledge is impossible, and this knowledge requires philosophical principles.

B. The recognition of correct gnostic disclosures is achieved by their comparison with the standards of reason and the (religious) law, and by one or more intermediaries they go back to principles of philosophy.

C. Since gnostic visions are a sort of interior perception and are completely personal, their mental interpretations are achieved by means of concepts and these are then transformed into others by means of terms and expressions, and in view of the fact that most gnostic truths are beyond the level of common understanding, precise concepts and proper terminology must be e

The Assistance given by Gnosis (‘Irfan) to Philosophy

A. As was previously indicated, gnostic disclosures and visions raise new problems for philosophical analysis which help with the broadening of vision and the development of philosophy.

B. Where problems are solved in the philosophical sciences by means of rational proof, gnostic visions are considered a powerful corroboration, and in reality, that which is understood by the philosophy by means of reason is found by the gnostic by means of visions of the heart.

Lesson 10: The Necessity of Philosophy

The Man of the Age

The sun has newly risen from its bed of the green waters of the sea, and flashes its golden rays on the sleepy faces of the voyagers of as ship, voyagers who have just awakened from last night's slumber, and who, with minds at ease and unaware of all else, have begun eating and drinking and amusing themselves. The ship, as always, advances through the limitless ocean.

Meanwhile, somebody who seems brighter than the others starts to think a bit, and then turns to his shipmates and asks, "Where are we going?" Somebody else who seems to have been roused from his sleep, ask the same question of the others in wonder, and.... Some are so intoxicated with their enjoyments and amusements that they pay no heed to him, and continue with their own affairs without thinking of answering this question. But little by little, the question spreads until it reaches the crew and the captain. They also repeat the question without having an answer for it. At last, a question mark hangs in the atmosphere of the ship and a strange horror and embracing distress appear.

Is this imaginary scene not the story of the people of the world, who have boarded the great ship of the earth, and while revolving about themselves in cosmic space, they travel through the limitless ocean of time? Are they not like cattle feeding, as it says in the Qur'an:

"They take their enjoyment and eat as cattle eat" **(47:12)**.

And it also says:

"they have hearts, but understand not with them; they have eyes, but perceive not with them; they have ears, but they hear not with them. They are like cattle; nay, rather they are further astray. Those— they are the heedless." **(7:179)**.

Yes! This is the story of the people of our times, who along with the amazing progress of technology have become afflicted with puzzlement and wandering and knows not from where they have come and to where they are going, and to which direction they must turn, and which path they must take.

This is why absurdism, nihilism and hippie-ism have appeared in the space age. Like a cancer they attack the soul, thought and spirit of civilized man, and like termites eat away at the pillars of palace of humanity and weaken it.

These questions raised by conscious people who have roused the semiconscious have compelled thinkers to seek answers to them. A group of those ready to think correctly have obtained correct, illuminating and orienting answers. They know the true purpose, and they eagerly follow the straight

path.

However, those who are under the influence of immature thought and psychological factors imagine that there is no beginning and no end to the caravan, and that there are always ships which appear upon the ocean, and by means of roaring waves are aimlessly pulled this way and that. But, before they reach the safe and tranquil shore, they drown in the sea,

"They say, there is nothing but our present life; we die and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us" **(45:24).**

In any case, these questions are wily-nilly raised for the conscious person: What is the beginning? What is the end? What is the right path toward the aim? It is obvious that the natural and mathematical sciences have no answer to them, so what is to be done? In what way is the correct answer to these questions to be obtained?

In the previous lessons the way to find answers to these questions has been indicated, that is, each of these three basic questions is related to a branch of philosophy and must be investigated by rational methods. All of them require metaphysics or First Philosophy. Hence, we must begin with epistemology and ontology and then deal with the philosophical sciences to find correct answers to these questions and others like them.

Social Schools

Wandering and bewilderment which have befallen space age man are not limited to individual and personal problems, for attendant social problems have also crystallized in various political and economic schools and systems, and although these artificial systems have failed to prove themselves worthy and complete, there are still wandering societies of people who have not given them up, and even those who have been disillusioned continue to plod along in the same deviant directions seeking new artificial systems woven from the same cloth.

Each time a new "-ism" appears in the arena of ideology, a misled group is attracted to it, and a brawl and tussle gets underway. It does not take very long before they fall, broken and unfulfilled until the time when they appear again under a new name, new color and scent to deceive another group.

It seems that these unfortunate misled people have vowed never to listen to the call of the truth and not to listen to words of divine leaders, and they gripe, "Why are your hands empty of the silver and gold and all that glitters in this world? If you speak the truth, why are the white and red palaces not in your control?"

Yes, these are the followers of those whose stories are repeatedly whispered by the Noble Qur'an into the ears of the people of the world. But where are the ears of the listeners?!

Anyway, as an invitation by way of wisdom, one should say: social systems must be arranged on the basis of awareness of the nature of man and all his existential aspects, with regard to the purposes of his creation, and in recognition of the factors which enable him to achieve the final goal. Finding such a complicated formula is beyond the mental capacities of ordinary humans.

That which can be expected of our thought is knowledge of fundamental problems and general foundations of these systems which should be established more firmly and steadfastly, that is, knowledge of the Creator of the cosmos and man, knowledge of the purposefulness of human life, and knowledge of the way opened by the Wise Creator for man so that he may journey and progress toward the final goal.

Then it is time for the heart to turn toward Him, to head down the path and following the divine guides to take firm steps, and without doubt or wavering to fare the way and make haste.

If one fails to benefit from the God given blessing of reason, does not think of the beginning and end of being, fails to solve the basic problems of life, selfishly chooses his own way, and brings about a system and sets his own powers and those of others for its sake, then such a one will suffer the consequences of his own selfishness, foolishness, licentiousness, aberrant thinking and perversities. Finally, one must not blame others for his lack of fulfillment and misfortunes.

Yes! Finding the correct ideology depends on having the correct world view, and until the bases of the world view are firmly established, until its fundamental problems are properly solved and until opposing temptations are dispelled, one cannot hope to find a fair, useful and effective ideology. Until one knows what there is one will never be able to discover what ought to be.

The fundamental problems of a world view are the same threefold questions for which the awakened consciousness innate to man seeks definite and convincing answers. It is not without reason that Islamic scholars have called them the “principles of religion” (usul al-din): theology answers the question: “What is the beginning?”; the study of the resurrection answers the question of “What is the end?”; the study of revelation and prophecy answers the questions of “What is the way, and who is the guide?”

It goes without saying that the correct and definite solution to these questions depend on philosophical and rational ideas. In this way, we are led by another route to the importance and necessity of the problems of philosophy, and prior to all of them, those of epistemology and ontology.

The Mystery of Humanity

There is a third way to come to appreciate the importance and necessity of philosophy which can motivate those who are of extraordinary aspiration and who seek advancement, and it is that the true humanity of man depends on the gains of philosophy, and the explanation of this is as follows:

All animals are known to have the characteristic that their actions are performed with consciousness and

will which spring from the instincts. An existent which has no sort of consciousness is outside the realm of the animals. Among the animals there is a distinguished kind whose under-standing is not limited to sensory perception and whose will does not conform to natural instincts, but who has another perceptive power called the intellect, such that man's will takes form in the light of his intellect. In other words, what distinguishes man is his own vision and inclinations.

So, if one limits oneself to sensory perceptions alone, and does not benefit from his own intellectual powers, and his movements are entirely determined by his animal instincts, then in reality, he is nothing more than an animal, or rather, according to the Qur'an, he is even further astray than the beasts.

Therefore, the real man is one who uses his own intellect in order to determine the most important aspects of his destiny, and on that basis comes to know, in a general way, how to live, and then, in all seriousness, he fares the way.

From what has been explained previously it became known that the most fundamental problems facing the conscious human being which play a crucial role in the social and individual destinies of man are the same fundamental problems of a world view, problems whose ultimate and definite solutions depend on philosophical efforts.

We may conclude that without the benefit of that which is obtained through philosophy, neither individual nor social felicity is possible, nor the achievement of the true perfection of man.

The Solution to Some Problems

Regarding these explanations, it is possible that some doubts may be raised, the most important of which will be mentioned with answers to each of them.

Objection 1: These explanations can establish the necessity of philosophy only when the world view is restricted to a philosophical one, and the way to solve its fundamental problems is limited to philosophy, while other world views exist as well, such as the scientific world view, the religious world view and the mystical ('irfani) world view.

Answer 1: As has been repeatedly explained, the solution to these sorts of problems is beyond the scope of the empirical sciences, and therefore, there is really no such thing as the "scientific world view" (in its proper meaning). However, regarding the religious world view, it can only be of use when we know what the true religion is. And this, in turn, is based on knowledge of the Prophet and the One Who sent him, that is, God the Exalted, and it is clear that basis of the content of revelation one cannot prove the one who sent it or the one who received it.

For example, one cannot say that since the Qur'an says that God exists, His existence has been proven! Regarding the mystical world view, as was indicated in the section on the relation between philosophy and gnosis ('irfan), it depends on prior knowledge of God the Exalted, and prior knowledge of the correct

way of spiritual wayfaring, which must be established on the basis of philosophical principles. Hence, all ways ultimately lead to philosophy.

Objection 2: In order for one's efforts to solve the problems of a world view and of philosophy to be worthwhile, one should be optimistic about reaching a conclusion to one's efforts. But considering the depth and breadth of these problems, one cannot have much hope for success. Therefore, instead of wasting one's life along a way whose destiny is uncertain, one had better investigate those problems for which there is more cause for hope of a solution.

Answer 2: First, the hope for a solution to these problems is no less than the hope for reaching an end to scientific efforts to discover scientific mysteries and conquering the forces of nature. Secondly, the value of estimation depends upon more than one factor, that is, its quantity of risk, rather, another factor must be taken into consideration, and that is the value of the outcome, and it is the result of multiplying these two factors which determines the value of an estimation.

Considering that the outcome here is infinite human felicity for eternity, no matter how weak the probability, the value of the estimation is more than the value of the probability of success by any other way whose outcome is finite and limited.

Objection 3: How can one be certain of the value of philosophy when many scholars have been opposed it and there are even ahadith which find fault with it?

Answer 3: Opposition to philosophy has originated from various people with various motivations, however, opposition from aware scholars and impartial Muslims really meant opposition to the set of current philosophical ideas, some of which—at least in the view the opponents—were not compatible with Islamic doctrine. And if there are some credible ahadith in which fault is found with philosophy, it is with the above mentioned meaning in which it is applicable. However, what we mean by philosophical efforts is the use of the intellect in order to solve those problems which can be solved only by rational methods.

And the necessity of this work is emphasized in the unambiguous verses of the Noble Qur'an and honorable ahadith, and abundant examples of these efforts may be observed in ahadith and even in the text of the Noble Qur'an, such as the reasoning about tawhid and the resurrection in the Book and the Sunnah.

Objection 4: If the problems about [the proper] world view are investigated by rational and philosophical methods in the Book and sunnah, then what need do we have for philosophical books and the discussions presented in them, discussions which are often derived from the Greeks?

Answer 4: Firstly, the presentation of philosophical discussions in the Book and Sunnah does not change their philosophical essence. Secondly, there should be no objection to extracting this set of problems and arranging them in the form of a science, as was done in the case of fiqh and usul, and the

other Islamic sciences.

The fact that the origins of these discussions are in the books of the Greeks, and even that they have been adapted, does not take away from the value of these problems, as is also true in the case of arithmetic, medicine and astronomy.

Thirdly, in the Book and Sunnah the doubts which were investigated were those which were current in that epoch, and this does not suffice to answer the objections one encounters almost every day from atheistic schools of thought. Rather, according to that which has been emphasized in the Noble Qur'an and the words of religious leaders, rational efforts must be expanded until they suffice for the preparation for the defense of true beliefs and replies to every sort of objection raised against them.

Objection 5: The best argument for the inadequacy of philosophy is the differences which exist among philosophers themselves, and attention to these differences brings about a loss of confidence in the correctness of their methods.

Answer 5: Differences regarding theoretical problems is an unavoidable feature of every science. The scholars of fiqh have differences of opinion about the problems of that subject, while these sorts of differences are no reason for the invalidity of the science of fiqh or the special methods of that science.

Likewise, the existence of differences between two mathematicians about a mathematical problem is no reason for the invalidity of mathematics. Attention to these differences should be a powerful motivation for devoted thinkers to increase their efforts and endeavors, to persist and persevere until they discover more certain results.

Objection 6: People have been observed who have made admirable studies in the philosophical sciences, but with respect both to personal and moral problems and to social and political matters they have weaknesses. So how can philosophy be considered the key to individual and social felicity?

Answer 6: The emphasis on the importance and necessity of philosophy does not mean that this science is the complete cause and sufficient condition for the possession of the correct ideology and behavior which accords with it, rather it means that it is a necessary condition for obtaining a desirable ideology, that is, following the right path depends on knowing it, and knowing the straight path depends on having a correct world view and solving its philosophical problems.

If someone takes a proper first step, but his second step falters or deviates, this is no reason for saying that the first step was also deviant, rather the cause of the faltering or deviation should be sought in the second step.

Part 2: Epistemology

Lesson 11: Introduction to Epistemology
Lesson 12: The Self-Evidence of the Principles of Epistemology
Lesson 13: The Divisions of Knowledge
Lesson 14: Acquired Knowledge
Lesson 15: Types of Universal Concepts
Lesson 16: Empiricism
Lesson 17: The Role of the Intellect and Sensation in Ideas
Lesson 18: The Role of the Intellect and Sensation in Affirmations
Lesson 19: The Value of Knowledge
Lesson 20: The Evaluation of Ethical and Legal Propositions

Lesson 11: Introduction to Epistemology

The Importance of Epistemology

There is a series of fundamental problems that confront man as a conscious being whose activities spring from his consciousness; and if man becomes negligent and remiss in his efforts to find correct answers to these problems, he will find instead that he has crossed the boundary between humanity and bestiality.

Remaining in doubt and hesitation, in addition to the inability to satisfy his truth-seeking conscience, it will not enable man to dispel anxieties about his likely responsibilities. He will be left to languish or, as occasionally happens, turn into a dangerous creature. Since mistaken and deviant solutions such as materialism and nihilism, cannot provide psychological comfort or social well- being. One should look for the fundamental cause of individual and social corruption in aberrant views and thoughts.

Hence, there is no alternative but to seek answers to these problems with firm and unflagging resolution. We may spare no effort until we establish a basis for our own human lives and in this way assist others as well, and arrest the influence in society of incorrect thoughts and the deviant teachings which are current.

Now that the necessity of an intellectual and philosophical endeavor has become clear and no room has been left for doubt or uncertainty or hesitancy, it remains for us to take the first step in the mandatory and unavoidable journey upon which we have resolved by facing up to the following question: Is the

human intellect able to solve these problems?

This query forms the nucleus about which the problems of epistemology are centered. Until we solve the problems of this branch of philosophy, we will neither be able to be arriving at solutions to the problems of ontology nor to those of the other branches of philosophy. Until the value of intellectual knowledge is determined, claims presented as actual solutions to such problems will be pointless and unacceptable. There will always remain such questions concerning how the intellect can provide a correct solution to these problems.

It is here that many of the well-known figures of Western philosophy, such as Hume, Kant , Auguste Compte , and all of the positivists have blundered. With their incorrect views they have mislaid the cultural foundations of Western societies, and even the scholars of other sciences, especially the behaviorists among psychologists, have been misled by them.

Unfortunately, the battering and ruinous waves of such teachings also have spread to other parts of the world, and apart from the lofty summits and unimpregnable cliffs that rest on the stable and firm grounds of divine philosophy, all else more or less has come under their influence.

Therefore, we must endeavor to take the first steady step by laying the foundations of our house of philosophical ideas solidly and sturdily until, with the help of Almighty God, we are worthy to tread through other stages and arrive at our desired goal.

A Brief Overview of the History of Epistemology

Although epistemology as a branch of philosophy does not have a long history as a separate science, it may be said that the problem of the value of knowledge, which forms its central axis, has been somehow raised since the most ancient periods of philosophy. Perhaps the attention of thinkers was first drawn to this problem by the discovery of the flaws and defects in the disclosure of external events by the sense organs. This very matter prompted the Eleatics to distrust sensory perception and to rely more heavily on rational knowledge.

On the other hand, differences among thinkers pertaining to rational problems and the contradictory proofs set forth by each group to substantiate and corroborate their own ideas and views provided the Sophists with the opportunity to deny the value of rational knowledge. They go so far in this way as basically to doubt and even to deny external realities.

After that, the problem of knowledge was not raised seriously until Aristotle compiled the principles of logic as standards for correct thinking and for evaluating proofs. After twenty some odd centuries, these principles are still useful. Even the Marxists, after battling for years against it, have finally accepted the human need for a part of this logic.

After the centuries during which Greek philosophy flourished, oscillations appeared in the evaluation of

sensory and rational knowledge. There were two other occasions when Europe was faced with the crisis of skepticism. After the period of the Renaissance and the development of the empirical sciences, empiricism gradually came to prevail.

At the present empiricism is still the dominant school of thought, although in the midst of this prominent rationalists do appear from time to time. Virtually the first systematic investigations in epistemology were performed by Leibniz on the continent of Europe, and in England by John Locke.

In this way an independent branch of philosophy took shape. Locke's investigations were followed by those of his successors, Berkeley and Hume. Their philosophy of empiricism won fame and gradually the position of the rationalists was weakened to such an extent that Kant, a rationalist, was actually very deeply influenced by the ideas of Hume.

Kant declared the evaluation of knowledge and the ability of reason to be one of the most important duties of philosophy. However, he only accepted the value of the conclusions of theoretical reason within the limits of the empirical sciences, mathematics, and areas subordinate to them. The first blow from among the rationalists was struck against metaphysics, although earlier Hume, a prominent figure amongst the empiricists, had begun a severe attack which would later be followed in a more serious form by the positivists.

In this way the precise influence of epistemology in the other fields of philosophy and the reasons underlying the decline of Western philosophy come to light.

Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy

In contrast to the oscillations and crises that developed for Western philosophy, especially in the field of epistemology, such that after the passage of the twenty-five centuries of its lifetime it not only has not acquired a firm and sturdy foundation, but rather it can be said that its support has become ever more unsteady, Islamic philosophy, to the contrary, has continually retained its strength and stability, and has never become the victim of shakiness, upheaval or crisis.

Despite some contrary tendencies which have occasionally posed a challenge for Islamic philosophers, they have maintained their doctrine that the intellect is fundamental for the solution of metaphysical problems. Without underestimating the importance of the experience of the senses or denying that of the experimental method in the natural sciences, they have persisted in the application of the rational method to philosophical problems.

Confrontation with those of opposing views and wrestling with critics, far from making Islamic philosophers weak, has only served to strengthen and increase their abilities. For this reason, the tree of Islamic philosophy has flourished and become more fruitful daily, and has even become resistant and immune to the attacks of its enemies. It is now completely capable of defending its rightful positions and

defeating its competitors.

The trends that have more or less been opposed to philosophy have had two main sources. From one quarter there are those who have considered some current philosophical views to conflict with literal interpretations of Scripture and Tradition (Sunnah), and fearing that the propagation of philosophy would weaken religious belief among the people, have opposed such views.

On the other hand, the ‘urafa (gnostics) have emphasized the importance of the spiritual way, and have feared that philosophical tendencies would lead to the neglect of the path of gnosis and lack of progress on the way of the heart. Hence, they ignored it, claiming that rationalists had wooden feet.[1]

One must realize that a true religion like the manifest religion of Islam will never be threatened by the thoughts of the philosophers. Despite whatever shortcomings or deviations they may have, with philosophical development and maturity and after passage from a raw and naive phase, the verities of Islam will come to the fore and its truth will become ever more manifest. Philosophy turns out to be a worthy and an irreplaceable servant [of Islam] on the one hand by explaining its lofty teachings, and on the other hand by defending it from perverse and hostile schools of thought, as it has done and shall continue to do in an ever improved manner, God willing.

Spiritual and gnostic wayfaring is by no means in conflict with divine philosophy; rather it has been assisted [by such philosophy] and has also profited from it. It must be admitted that on the whole this sort of conflict has been useful for preventing one-sidedness and extremism, and for demarcating the bounds of each of them.

Because of the sturdy, steadfast and unshakable position of the intellect in Islamic philosophy, no need has arisen for a detailed examination of the problems of knowledge in a methodical and systematic form as an independent branch of philosophy.

Merely a few scattered issues pertaining to knowledge, addressed in various chapters of logic and philosophy, have sufficed, for example, in one section pertaining to the teachings of the Sophists where their invalidity is pointed out, and in another section where the divisions of the sciences and their principles are explained. Even the problem of mental existence, which is one of the topics germane to the problems of knowledge, was not advanced as an independent topic until Ibn Sina. Even after that, all angles and sides of the issue have not been comprehensively examined and researched.

Now, considering the current conditions, when Western thought has almost penetrated our cultural environs raising questions about many of the axioms of divine philosophy, philosophical questions can no longer be limited to their former framework, and the discussion can no longer be carried on in the traditional manner.

Since this manner has not only prevented the development of philosophy through interchange with other schools of thought, but also has made our intellectuals, who inevitably have become and will continue to

become familiar with Western thought, pessimistic about Islamic philosophy, bringing about the illusion that Islamic philosophy has lost its effectiveness and is unable to compete with other philosophical schools. Hence, day by day, their tendency toward foreign culture increases, with disastrous results. This situation could be seen during the previous regime in our universities.

To repay our debt to the Islamic Revolution and the sacred blood which has been shed for it, and to fulfill our divine responsibility we should increase our efforts to explain the foundations of philosophy and propagate them in such a way that they may answer the doubts posed by the perverted and atheistic schools of thought, and we should support the current needs for belief and make it available to young seekers of truth and investigators, so that the education of Islamic philosophy can spread, and so Islamic culture may be insured against the encroachments of alien ideas.

The Definition of Epistemology

Before we begin to define epistemology (shinakht shinasi) it is necessary to comment on the word shinakht (knowledge).[2]This word, which is equivalent to ma'rifah in Arabic, has various usages. Its most general meaning is knowledge in general, awareness and information. Sometimes it is used for particular perception, and sometimes for recognition. Sometimes it is employed for science which corresponds to reality with certainty. There are some debates in philology and etymology about the foreign synonyms which need not be mentioned here.

Knowledge as the subject of the science of epistemology may be understood as having any of these meanings or any other. In fact, it is based on convention. But since the goal of surveying epistemological problems is not particular to any specific kind of knowledge, it is better to use that general meaning which is equivalent to knowledge in a general sense.

The concept of knowledge is one of the clearest and most self-evident concepts, so that it not only is in need of no definition, but its definition is impossible, since there are no more obvious terms by which to define it.

The phrases and statements which are used in philosophical and logical books as definitions of knowledge and science are not genuine definitions. The purpose of mentioning them is to specify its instances in some specific science or field of study. For example, logicians define knowledge as "the obtaining of the form of something in the mind," and the purpose of this definition is to specify their intended instance which is "acquired knowledge".

Or it refers to the view concerning certain problems of ontology of some philosophers who define knowledge as "the presence of a non-material being to another non-material being," or "the presence of a thing to a non-material existent." The purpose of these definitions is to state their view about the non-material nature of knowledge and the knowing subject.

If we are to explain knowledge, it is better to say that it is the presence of the thing itself or its particular form or its general concept in a non-material existent. In addition, we should say that it is not necessary for knowledge that the knower always should be other than the object known. It is possible, as in the case of awareness of one's own self, that there be no difference between the knower and the object of knowledge.

In fact in such cases unity is the most perfect instance of presence. By the definition we have presented of the word knowledge we may define epistemology as 'the science which discusses human knowledge and the evaluation of its types and the criteria of their validity.

1. The way of the rationalists, according to the sufis, such as Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), is artificial, like that of one who would walk with crutches, or like that of the blind man who walks with a cane. See the Mathnavi, Bk. 1, 2128. (Tr.)
2. The Farsi word used for epistemology in this text is shinakht-shinasi, both halves of which are derived from the verb shinakhtan, which means 'to know' in the sense of being acquainted with, as in the German kennen, as opposed to wissen. Today, the term ma'rifat shinasi has gained wider currency in Iran. (Tr.)

Lesson 12: The Self-Evidence of the Principles of Epistemology

The Nature of the Dependence of Philosophy on Epistemology

Understanding the concept of knowledge in a broad sense which includes every kind of awareness and perception, many topics of epistemology could be presented, some of which do not formally come under this science, such as those concerning revelation, inspiration, and the kinds of mystical disclosure and intuition.

However, one problem which is usually included for discussion in this branch of philosophy pivots about the senses and the intellect. But we cannot discuss all of these issues here, for our principal aim is to explain the value of intellectual perception and to affirm the truth of philosophy and the validity of its rational methods.

For this reason, we shall only present those topics which are useful for metaphysics and theology, and incidentally for some other areas of philosophy such as philosophical psychology and philosophical ethics.

At this point it is possible to raise the question of what are the basic premises which support epistemology, and in what way they can be confirmed. The answer is that epistemology is in no need of

borrowed axioms for its subjects, for its issues can be clarified solely on self-evident primary grounds (badihiyyat awwaliyyah).

Another question which may be raised is this: If the solutions to the problems of ontology and other sciences which are arrived at by rational methods depend upon whether or not the intellect has the capacity to solve these sorts of problems, doesn't that imply that first philosophy [metaphysics] also is in need of the science of epistemology to provide the basic axioms of philosophy, although it is said that philosophy has no need for any other science?

Elsewhere we have indicated the answer to this question. Here we present a more precise answer. First, the premises directly needed by metaphysics are really self-evident judgments and have no need of proof, and the explanations regarding these judgments given in the science of logic or epistemology are in truth expository, clarifying rather than argumentative.

That is, they are a means to direct the attention of the mind toward a truth which the intellect understands without need for reasons. The reason for discussing this kind of judgment in these sciences is that misconceptions have arisen about them which turn into doubts, as in the case of the most self-evident of judgments, that is, the impossibility of contradiction, leading some even to imagine that contradiction is not only not impossible, but that it underlies all reality.

Doubts which have arisen about the value of rational knowledge are cut from the same cloth. It is to address these doubts and to remove these misconceptions from the mind that these discussions are undertaken. Really, the inclusion of these judgments among the topics of logic or epistemology is a digression, an indulgence, or condescension for the sake of those who harbor suspicions. If someone did not accept the value of rational knowledge, albeit unconsciously, how could one argue with him on the basis of rational proof?! Even the arguments advanced in favor of such doubts would be of a rational nature (note carefully).

Secondly, the need of philosophy for the principles of logic and epistemology is an application of knowledge to knowledge. To explain, someone whose mind has not been poisoned by doubt can reason to a certain conclusion with respect to most topics, and his reasoning would be in accord with logical principles without the need for attending to them and without knowing, for instance, that his reasoning accords with the first form of the syllogism and the conditions that govern it, or without being aware that there is an intellect which understands these premises and which accepts the validity of the conclusion that follow from them.

On the other hand, it is possible that some, in order to refute rationalism or metaphysics may employ reasoning and be unaware of the rational metaphysical premises they use, or in order to refute the rules of logic they may base their reasoning on the rules of logic, or even in order to invalidate the inviolability of the law of contradiction, they may resort to this very principle without being aware of it, and if they were told, 'This reasoning of yours is both valid and invalid,' they would become annoyed and regard

this as mockery.

Thus, in reality, the dependence of philosophical reasoning on the principles of logic or the principles of epistemology is not the sort of need that the sciences have for the posited principles of their subjects.

Rather it is a secondary need involving the dependence of the principles of these sciences upon themselves; that is, it is the need for reconfirmation in science, for acquiring further confirmation for these judgments, as in the case of the self-evident propositions concerning which it is said that they depend on the impossibility of a contradiction.

It is clear that the dependence of self-evident propositions on this principle is not of the same kind as the dependence of speculative propositions on self-evident propositions, otherwise the difference between self-evident and speculative propositions would not remain, and at least one proposition, the principle of non-contradiction, has to be accepted as being self-evident.

The Possibility of Knowledge

Every rational person is of the belief that he does know things, and that he can know things. Hence he makes an effort to acquire information concerning matters of his needs or interests, and the best sign of this sort of effort is what scientists and philosophers have done by bringing about the various fields of the sciences and philosophy.

Hence the possibility and actuality of science is not something that any rational person whose mind has not been confounded by doubt would deny or even have reservations about. That which is open to discussion or examination and which it is reasonable to disagree about is identification of the frontiers of human knowledge and specification of the means of acquiring certain knowledge, and the way to distinguish correct from incorrect thought, and matters of this kind.

As has been indicated in previous discussions, in Europe, dangerous waves of skepticism have repeatedly appeared, and even great thinkers have been swallowed by it. The history of philosophy remembers schools of thought which absolutely have denied knowledge, such as sophism, skepticism, and agnosticism.

The best explanation of the absolute denial of knowledge (if this charge is correct) is that its victims were afflicted by a severe form of over scrupulousness, a state which affects some people with regard to various other matters as well.

Actually it should be considered a kind of mental illness. In any event, without going into a historical investigation concerning the existence of such people and inquiring into the motivation behind such views or the verity of their ascription to those who are claimed to have held them, we take them as doubts or questions that require an answer suitable to philosophical discussion, leaving the subject of historical fact to be decided by historical research.

A Survey of the Claims of the Skeptics

That which has been reported of the statements of the sophists and the skeptics may be divided from one angle into two parts: one having to do with what they have said about existence and being, and the other concerning what they have expressed about science and knowledge. That is, their statements have two aspects: one aspect concerns the subject of ontology, while the other pertains to epistemology.

For example, the remark is attributed to one of the most extreme of the sophists, Gorgias: “Nothing exists, and if there were anything, it could not be known, and even there were knowledge of being, this knowledge could not be communicated to others.” The first phrase of this remark is about being, which must be discussed in the section on ontology, but the second phrase is relevant to the present discussion, epistemology, and so, naturally, it is this second phrase which we shall proceed to discuss, while the first phrase will be examined in the discussions of ontology.

First, this point must be mentioned: all who would doubt everything will not be able to doubt their own existence, the existence of their doubt, nor their perceptual faculties, such as the power of sight and hearing, and the existence of mental forms and their own psychological states. If someone even expresses doubts about these cases, he is either sick, and must be cured, or he is lying and expresses evil intentions, and so must be corrected and reprimanded.

Likewise, someone who speaks and discusses or writes books cannot doubt the existence of a party to the discussion, or the existence of the paper or the pen with which he writes. At the extreme it might be said that I perceive all these things within myself but I doubt their existence in the external world. As would appear from the statements of Berkeley and some other idealists, they accepted all objects of perception as mere forms within the mind, and denied their external existence.

However, they accepted the existence of other people who have minds and perceptions. This view is not an absolute denial of knowledge and existence, but a denial of material existents, and their doubt amounts to one in relation to some of the objects of knowledge.

Now, if someone claims that no certain knowledge is possible, the question will be put to him as to whether he knows this, or whether he also has some doubt about it. If he says that he knows it, then at least one thing that is certainly known has been admitted, and his own claim has been violated. If he says that he does not know it, this means that it is possible that he grants the likelihood of certain knowledge. In other words, his own speech has been shown to be invalid.

However, if someone says that he has doubts about the possibility of knowledge and definite knowledge claims, it will be asked of him whether he knows that he has such doubts or not. If he answers that he knows that he has such doubts, and then not only the possibility but the actuality of knowledge has been admitted. If, however, he says that he also has doubts about his very own doubts, this very speech is either caused by illness or bad intention, and requires a non-theoretical response.

In response to those who advocate the relativity of all knowledge, who claim that no proposition is valid absolutely, universally and eternally, one may ask such a person whether that claim itself is valid absolutely, universally and eternally, or whether it is relative, particular, and temporary.

If it holds always in all cases and with no qualification or condition then it is true. Then at least one proposition which is absolute, universal and eternal has been proved. If this knowledge itself is also relative this means that in some cases it is not valid, and in the cases where it does not hold there are propositions which are absolute, universal and eternal.

The Rejection of the Doubts of the Skeptics

One of the doubts upon which the sophists and skeptics rely and which they have expressed in various forms and by presenting different examples are the following: Sometimes one acquires certainty about the existence of something by means of the senses, but afterwards he comes to realize that a mistake has been made.

Thus one comes to know that sensory perception is not necessarily reliable. It follows that the likelihood arises that my other sensory perceptions may also be mistaken, and the day may come when their error will also become apparent. Likewise sometimes a person finds a principle to be certain on rational grounds, but afterwards he finds that his reasoning was incorrect, and his certainty is transformed into doubt.

Thus it becomes known that intellectual reasoning is also not necessarily reliable. In the same way the probability of error infects other intellectual perceptions. The conclusion is that neither sensation nor reasons are reliable. Nothing remains for man but doubt.

The response would be as follows:

1. The purpose of this argument is to arrive at the validity of skepticism and the knowledge of its truth through reasoning, and at least to get the other party to the discussion to accept your point, that is, you expect that he will attain knowledge of the validity of your claims, while you maintain that the attainment of knowledge is absolutely impossible.

2. The discovery of error in sensory and intellectual perceptions implies the knowledge that these perceptions do not conform to reality. This necessarily implies that we accept the existence of knowledge of the error of perception.

3. Another implication is that we know that there is a reality with which our mistaken perception does not accord, otherwise there would be no concept of the error of perception.

4. Another implication is that it must be known to us that the mistaken perception itself and its mental form are contrary to actuality.

5. Finally, the existence of the one who errs, as well as his senses and intellect must be accepted.

6. This reasoning itself is a rational argument (however fallacious) and to rely upon it is to consider the intellect and its perceptions to be reliable.

7. In addition to this, other knowledge is assumed here, and that is that mistaken perceptions, being in error, cannot be true. So, the skeptic's argument itself implies the acceptance of several instances of knowledge, and so how can one deny the possibility of knowledge absolutely, or even doubt it?

All of these answers refute the argument of the skeptics. In analyzing it and exposing its fallacy we prove the validity and error of sensory perception by the help of reasoning. However, as has also been said, it is not true that the discovery of error in intellectual perceptions also infects all other intellectual perceptions, because the possibility of error may only enter speculative, or other than self-evident, perceptions.

But the self-evident propositions of the intellect which are the basis of philosophical proofs do not admit of error at all, and the explanation of their infallibility will be presented in Chapter Lesson Nineteen.

Lesson 13: The Divisions of Knowledge

In Search of the Cornerstone of Knowledge

It was mentioned in the previous lesson that some knowledge and perceptions are completely indubitable. Furthermore, the reasons given by the skeptics to justify their perverted views based on their absolute denial of knowledge embody and necessitate several instances of knowledge.

On the other hand, we know that not all our 'knowledge' and beliefs are true or correspond to reality, and furthermore, in many cases we ourselves notice some falsehoods. In view of these two points, the questions arise as to the differences among the varieties of human perceptions, such that some of them are infallible and indubitable while others are fallible and doubtable, and how we might distinguish between them.

It is a well-known matter that Descartes tried to found an unshakable philosophy in order to combat skepticism, and he used the indubitability of doubt itself as the cornerstone of his philosophy. Furthermore, the existence of the ego of the doubter and thinker is a corollary based on that foundation.

He introduced clarity and distinctness as the criterion of indubitability, which he made a standard for distinguishing correct from incorrect ideas. He also attempted to employ a mathematical approach to philosophy, and in fact sought to introduce a new logic.

We are not presently in a position to evaluate Descartes' philosophy or to examine the degree to which he was successful at the task he set for himself. We shall only mention the point that to begin with doubt as a starting point for arguing with the skeptics is reasonable, as was seen in the previous lesson.

However, if someone were to imagine that nothing is quite so clear and certain, and that even the existence of the doubter must be inferred from the doubt, this would not be valid. Rather the existence of the aware and thinking ego is at least as clear and indubitable as the existence of the doubt itself which is one of its states.

Likewise, 'clarity and distinctness' cannot be considered the major criterion for distinguishing correct from incorrect ideas, for this criterion by itself is not sufficiently clear and distinct and free from ambiguity, and is not a serious and crucial measure, and consequently cannot divulge the secret of the infallibility of certain kinds of perceptions. To be sure, other views of Descartes could be argued at great length, but such an examination would be outside the scope of the present study.

The First Division of Science

The first division of knowledge to be considered is that between (1) the knowledge which is known directly of the essence (dhat)[1] of the known object, in which the real and genuine existence of the object of knowledge is disclosed to the knowing subject or the percipient, and (2) the knowledge in which the external existence of its object is not observed and witnessed by the knower; rather he becomes aware of it by the mediation of something which represents it, which is termed its 'form' (surat) or 'mental concept' (mafhum dhihni).

The first kind is called 'presentational knowledge' or 'knowledge by presence' ('ilm hudhuri) and the second kind is called 'acquired knowledge' ('ilm husuli), [that is, knowledge acquired by conceptual representation].

The division of knowledge into these two kinds is rational, comprehensive and exclusive, and in this regard no third state can be supposed besides these two; that is, there is no knowledge other than knowledge which is of these two kinds.

Either there is an intermediary between the person who knows and the essence of the known object, by means of which the awareness is obtained, in which case the knowledge is called 'acquired,' or such an intermediary does not exit, or in that case there will be 'knowledge by presence.' However, the existence of these two kinds of knowledge in man needs to be explained.

Knowledge by Presence

The knowledge and awareness that every one has of himself as a perceiving existent, is a knowledge which cannot be denied. Even the sophists who considered man to be the measure of all things did not

deny the existence of man himself and the knowledge man has of himself.

Of course, this means that man himself, his very ego, is a perceiver, a thinker, who by internal witnessing (shuhud) is aware of himself, neither by means of sensation or experience nor by forms or mental concepts. In other words, he himself is the knowledge, and in this knowledge and awareness there is no plurality or otherness between knowledge, the knower, and the known object.

As was previously mentioned, 'the unity of the knower and the known' is the most perfect instance of 'the presence of the known object to the knower'. However, awareness of man by color, shape, and other characteristics of the body are not like this, but is acquired through sight, touch, and the other senses, and by means of mental forms.

Within the body there are numerous internal organs of which we are not aware, unless we come to know of them by means of their signs and effects, or we become aware of them by learning anatomy, physiology, and other biological sciences.

Likewise, this means that such knowledge is simple and unanalyzable, not such as the propositions, "I am," or "I exist," which are composed of several concepts. Thus, the meaning of 'self-knowledge' is this very intuitive, simple and direct awareness of our own souls. This knowledge and awareness is an essential characteristic of this 'self-knowledge'.

This is proved in its own appropriate place [in this book], that the soul is immaterial and that every non-material substance is aware of itself. These topics are related to ontology and philosophical psychology, consequently this is not the place to discuss them.

Our awareness of our psychological states, sentiments and passions are cases of direct presentational knowledge. When we become frightened we become directly aware of this psychological state without any intermediary, without the mediation of any form or mental concept.

When we are affectionate toward someone or something, we find this inclination within ourselves. When we make a decision to do something, we are aware of our decision and will. To be afraid of something, or to like something, or to decide to do something without awareness of the fear, or affection, or will is meaningless. For the same reason, the existence of our doubts or suppositions is undeniable. No one can claim that he is unaware of his own doubt, and that he doubts the existence of his doubt!

Another instance of knowledge by presence is the knowledge the self has of its perceptive and motor faculties. The awareness the self has of its ability to think or imagine or of its motor abilities is presentational knowledge and is direct. These things are not known by means of forms or mental concepts.

For this reason one never makes a mistake about their employment. For example, one never uses the perceptive faculty instead of one's motor abilities, and one never uses one's ability to move instead of

thinking about something. Among the things known by presence are the forms and mental concepts themselves, which are not known to the self through the mediation of other forms and concepts.

If it were necessary for knowledge of anything to be obtained by means of forms and mental concepts, one would have to know every mental form by means of some other form, and knowledge of that form also by means of another form. In this way, for everything you knew you would have to know an infinite number of other things and have an infinite number of other mental forms.

It is possible that a question might be raised here, for if presentational knowledge is the thing known itself, then it becomes necessary that mental forms will be both presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge.

For these forms, in one respect will be known by presence so, they themselves will be knowledge by presence itself. In another respect, it is supposed that they are cases of acquired knowledge of external things. So, how is it possible that one knowledge can be both presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge?

The answer is that mental forms have the property of mirroring outer forms and representing external things, and as they are means for knowing external things, they are considered as cases of acquired knowledge.

With respect to the fact that they are present before the self, and the self is directly aware of them, they count as presentational knowledge. These two respects are different from one another: the respect of their being present is the self's direct awareness of them and the respect of their being acquired is their representing external things.

In order to explain this further we shall attend to the analogy of the mirror. We are able to observe a mirror in two independent ways. One way is that of one who wants to buy a mirror, which looks at both sides of it to see that it is not broken or defective. The other way is that of one who uses the mirror, as when we look at the mirror to see our face, and although we look at the mirror, our attention is to our own face, not to the mirror.

Mental forms can also be independently attended to by the self, and in this case we say that they are perceived by presentational knowledge. They can also be a means by which external things or persons may be known, and in this case we say that they are cases of acquired knowledge.

It should be noted that the point of this explanation is not to distinguish the two cases temporally; rather the point is to distinguish two respects, without entailing that a mental concept, in so far as it is a case of acquired knowledge of an external object, should not also be known by the self or lack the respect of presence to the self.

The Reason behind the Infallibility of Presentational Knowledge:

By attending to the explanation given about presentational knowledge and acquired knowledge and the difference between them, it becomes known why

the knowledge of the self and knowledge of the states of the self and likewise other cases of knowledge by presence are fundamentally infallible, for in these cases it is the reality itself which is observed. To the contrary, in cases of acquired knowledge, forms and mental concepts play an intermediate role, and possibly there may not be complete correspondence with external things and persons.

In other words, error in perception is imaginable when there is an intermediary between the perceiving person and the perceived entity, and knowledge is realized by means of it. In this case the question arises as to whether this form or concept which mediates between the perceiving subject and the perceived object and plays the role of reflecting the perceived object represents the perceived object precisely and corresponds to it perfectly or not.

Unless it is proved that this form and concept corresponds precisely to the perceived object certainty will not be acquired with respect to the validity of the perception. However, in the case that the thing or person perceived is present before the perceiver without any intermediary with its own very existence, or is united with it, no error can be supposed, and one cannot ask whether the knowledge corresponds with what is known or not, for in this case the knowledge is the known itself.

Furthermore, the meaning of truth and error in perception now become clear. Truth is the perception which corresponds to reality and completely reveals it. Error is the belief which does not correspond to reality.

The Concomitance of Acquired Knowledge with Presentational Knowledge

Here we should mention an important point, namely that the mind always takes a picture of what is present to it like an automatic machine. From these it gets specific forms and concepts and then analyzes and interprets them. For example, when one becomes afraid his mind takes a photo of the state of fear which it can remember after the state has left.

Furthermore, it apprehends its universal concept and by appending other concepts projects it as a proposition such as ‘I am afraid,’ or ‘I have fear,’ or ‘Fear exists in me.’ It interprets the appearance of this psychological state with a marvelous alacrity on the basis of its previous knowledge and identifies its cause.

This entire mental process, which is accomplished so quickly, is distinct from the state of fear and its presentational knowledge. However, simultaneity with knowledge by presence is often the source of a

mistake, and one fancies that since he finds fear with knowledge by presence he also comes to know its cause with knowledge by presence, but that which was apprehended with knowledge by presence is simple, without any form or concept and also devoid of any interpretation whatsoever, and that is why it allows no room for error.

To the contrary, the simultaneous interpretation is from acquired perceptions which by themselves provide no guarantee of truth and correspondence to reality. With this explanation it becomes clear why and how mistakes occur in some cases of acquired knowledge. For example, a person feels hungry and thinks that he needs food, but this is a false appetite and he does not really need to have a meal.

The reason is that that which has been perceived with the infallible presentational knowledge was that specific feeling, which was accompanied by a mental interpretation based on comparison with previous feelings according to which the cause of the feeling must be a need for food. This comparison, however, is incorrect and because of it an error occurs in specifying the cause and providing a mental interpretation.

The errors which occur in gnostic disclosures are also of this sort. Hence, it is necessary to be completely precise in specifying presentational knowledge and to distinguish it from its accompanying mental interpretations in order not to err as a result of this confusion.

Gradation in Knowledge by Presence

Another noteworthy point is that all cases of presentational knowledge are not equal with respect to intensity or weakness. Rather, sometimes knowledge by presence is adequately powerful and intense to come to one's consciousness, while at other times it is so weak and pale that one is only semiconscious or even unconscious of it.

Sometimes the difference among the levels of knowledge by presence are caused by difference in the levels of existence of the perceiving subjects, that is, to the extent that the self is weak with respect to the degree of existence, his presentational knowledge will also be weak and pale.

To the extent that the degree of his existence is more perfect, his knowledge by presence will be more perfect and more conscious. This explanation depends on explanation of the gradation of existence and of the degrees of perfection of the self, which are to be proved in another area of philosophy, but here we can accept that on the basis of these two principles it is possible for presentational knowledge to be intense or weak.

Knowledge by presence of psychological states also can have other forms of intensity and weakness. For example, when a sick person who is suffering from pain and who perceives this pain with knowledge by presence, sees a close friend and turns his attention to him, he no longer perceives the pain.

To the contrary, in times of solitude, and especially in the dark of night in which there is nothing else to

which he can pay attention, he feels the pain more intensely, and the cause of this is the intensity of his attention. Differences in the degrees of presentational knowledge may effect the mental interpretations associated with the degrees of intensity and weakness.

For example, although a self at the lowest levels has presentational knowledge of itself, it is possible that due to the weakness of this knowledge it may imagine that the relation between the self and the body is the relation of identity, concluding that the reality of the self is this very material body or the phenomena related to it, but when a more perfect degree of knowledge by presence is achieved, and in other words, when the substance of the self is perfected, such a mistake will no longer occur.

Likewise, in its proper place it is proved that man has presentational knowledge of his Creator, but due to weakness of the degree of existence and also due to the attention given to the body and material things, this knowledge becomes unconscious. However, with the perfection of the self and decrease in attention to the body and material things and the strengthening of attention of the heart to God, the Exalted, this same knowledge will reach the stage of clarity and consciousness, until one says: "Is there any manifestation of [something] other than You and not of You?"2

1. By essence (dhat) is meant the thing itself, the reality of the thing. This is to be distinguished from the whatness or quiddity, which is the descriptive answer to the Aristotelian question, 'What is it?'
2. These words are commonly attributed to Imam Husayn ('a) and are included in standard printings of his Supplication of the Day of 'Arafah, although Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (1037/1628 – 1110/1699) expresses doubts about the authenticity of this part of the supplication and opines that it is the work of a sufi shaykh. See William Chittick, "A Shadhili Presence in Shi'ite Islam", Sophia Perennis, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1970, pp. 97–100, where it is pointed out that the section is from the munajat attributed to Ibn 'Ata'illah (d. 709/1309), included in the translation by Victor Danner, Sufi Aphorisms (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1985), p. 66, paragraph 19

Lesson 14: Acquired Knowledge

The Necessity for the Survey of Acquired Knowledge

We saw that knowledge by presence is the finding of reality itself, and that therefore there is no way to have doubt or scruple about it. But we know that the range of presentational knowledge is limited and by itself it cannot provide a solution to the problems of epistemology.

If there were no way to ascertain facts by means of acquired knowledge, we would not logically be able to accept definite theories in any science, and even self-evident first principles would lose their definiteness and necessity, and only the name of self-evidence and necessity would remain with them.

Therefore, it is necessary that we continue our endeavor to evaluate acquired knowledge and to obtain a criterion of truth for it. For the sake of this we shall survey the various kinds of acquired knowledge.

Idea and Affirmation

Logicians divide knowledge into two parts: idea (tasawwur) and affirmation (tasdiq). In fact, they have limited the common concept of knowledge to acquired knowledge, and on the other hand, they have extended it to include simple ideas.

The literal meaning of tasawwur is 'to form an image' and 'to acquire a form,' and in the terminology of the logicians it means a simple mental appearance which has the property of disclosing something beyond itself, such as the idea of Mount Damavand and the concept of mountain.

The literal meaning of tasdiq is 'to consider true' and 'to acknowledge,' and in the terminology of logicians and philosophers it is used with two similar meanings, and in this respect it is considered to be ambiguous:

i. a logical proposition which in simple form includes the subject, predicate, and judgment of unity;

ii. The judgment itself which is a simple matter and shows one's belief in the unity of the subject and predicate.

Some modern Western logicians imagine that affirmation (tasdiq) means the transference of the mind from one idea to another on the basis of the rules of the association of ideas. But this conception is incorrect, for neither is affirmation necessary everywhere there is an association of ideas, nor is an association of ideas required everywhere there is affirmation.

Rather, affirmation rests on judgment, and this is the very difference between a proposition and several ideas accompanying each other and following one upon the other in the mind, pictured without any relation between them.

Elements of the Proposition

We know that 'affirmation' in the sense of judgment is something simple, but in the sense of proposition it is composed of several elements. Several different views have been expressed about the elements of the proposition.

Since it would require a lengthy discussion to survey all of them, and such a survey properly belongs to the subject of logic, we shall merely have a glance at them here. Some say that each predicative proposition (qadhiyyah hamliyyah) is composed of two elements: subject and predicate.

Others add the relation between these two as a third element. Yet others consider the judgment of the occurrence of the relationship or the lack of occurrence of the relationship to be a fourth element of the proposition.

Some distinguish between affirmative and negative propositions and say that with regard to negative propositions a judgment does not exist, but rather they consider it to be a case of the negation of judgment.

Others deny the existence of the relation in simple existential propositions (halliyyah basitah), i.e. propositions which assert the existence of the subject in the external world, and in primary predications, i.e. propositions in which the conceptual content of the subject and the predicate are the same, such as 'Man is a rational animal.' However, undoubtedly, in logic no proposition can be without either a relationship or judgment, for, as we said, affirmation rests on judgment, and judgment is with respect to two elements of the proposition.

However, it is possible that one may have to recognize a difference among propositions from a philosophical and ontological point of view.

Divisions of Ideas

From one perspective, ideas can be divided into two types: universal and particular. A 'universal idea' is a concept which can represent numerous things or persons, such as the concept of man which applies to millions of individuals. A 'particular idea' is a mental form which only represents one existent, such as the mental form of Socrates.

Each of the ideas, whether universal or particular, may be further divided by other divisions about which we shall provide a brief explanation.

Sensory Ideas: These are simple phenomena in the soul which result from the effects of the relations between the sensory organs and material realities, such as images of scenery which we see with the eyes, or sounds which we hear with the ears. The subsistence of this kind of idea depends on the subsistence of relations with the external world, and after being cut off from contact with the external world they vanish in a short period of time (such as one tenth of a second).

Imaginary Ideas: These are simple specific phenomena in the soul which are subsequent results of sensory ideas and links with the external world. But their subsistence does not depend upon links with the external world, such as the mental image of a view of a garden which remains in the mind even after the eyes are closed, and may be recalled even after years have gone by.

Ideas of Prehension (Wahm):[1] Many philosophers have mentioned another kind of particular idea which is related to particular meanings, and which is exemplified by the feeling of enmity which some animals have for some others, a feeling which requires them to flee. Some philosophers have extended this term to cover particular meanings in general, including the feelings of affection and enmity of man.

Undoubtedly, universal concepts of affection and enmity are a kind of universal ideas. They cannot be counted as types of particular ideas.

The perception of particular affections and enmities in the perceiver himself that is the affection which a person finds in himself for another, or the enmity which he feels in himself for another, is really a kind of presentational knowledge of qualities of the soul, and we cannot count them as kinds of acquired knowledge.

Our feeling of another person's enmity, in fact, is not a direct feeling without intermediary, but it is a comparison between a state which a man has found within himself and attributed to another person in a similar condition. But judgments about the perceptions of animals require another discussion which we do not have the opportunity to pursue further here.

What can be accepted as a kind of specific idea is an idea which results from states of the soul, and is apt to be recalled, and which are like imaginary ideas with relation to sensory ideas, such as remembering a specific fear that appeared at a certain moment, or a specific affection which existed at a specific moment. It is necessary to mention that sometimes ideas of wahm are spoken of as ideas that do not correspond to any reality and are sometimes referred to as 'fantasy'.

Universal Ideas

We saw that in one respect ideas may be divided into two parts, universal and particular. The types of ideas which we have discussed until now have all been particular ideas. Universal ideas, which are called 'concepts of the intellect' or 'intelligibles' are the focus of important philosophical debates, and since long ago have been the subject of discussion.

From ancient times there have existed views according to which basically there are no universal concepts. The terms which are used to denote universal concepts are in reality like equivocal terms which denote various things.

For example, the term 'man' who is used to designate many individuals is like some proper name used by several families to name their children, or like a family name which applies to all the members of a family.

Proponents of this theory are known as 'nominalists.' At the end of the Middle Ages, William of Ockham inclined toward this theory, and it was later accepted by Berkeley. In modern times, positivists and some other schools must also be considered to hold this kind of position.[2] The other theory which is similar to that which has been mentioned is that universal concepts are vague particular concepts, such that some features of particular and specific forms are omitted so that they may conform to other things or persons.

For example, our idea of a specific person could be adapted to his brother by deleting some of its features. By deleting more features it could be applied to even more people, and by continuing in this way the idea becomes more general and applies to more and more people until at last it may even be applied to animals, or even plants and minerals, such as a phantom seen from afar, which because of its

vagueness may conform to the idea of a stone, tree, animal or a man.

This is why at first glance we doubt whether it is human or something else. The closer we get and the clearer we see it, the more restricted are the limits of probability, until finally, we determine a specific person or thing.

Hume had this sort of belief about universal concepts, and many others also have thought this way about universals. On the other hand, some ancient philosophers, such as Plato, insisted on the reality of universal concepts, and even considered them to have a kind of reality of their own outside the bounds of space and time.

The knowledge of universals is likened to a kind of observation of non-material entities and intellectual archetypes (Platonic Ideas). This theory has been interpreted in various ways and many theories have branched off from it.[3] Thus some have held that the human spirit prior to acquiring a body had seen intellectual truths in the world of immaterial entities, and after acquiring a body it forgot them, and by seeing material individuals, the spirit becomes reminded of these immaterial truths and the perception of universals is this remembering.

Others, who do not subscribe to the spirit's existence prior to its attachment with the body, understand sensory perception as a means to prepare the self to observe immaterial entities.

This observation which is obtained by this capacity is observation from afar, and the perception of universals is this same observation of non-material realities from afar, in contrast to gnostic disclosures, which are obtained by a different kind of preparation and are observed from up close.

Some Islamic philosophers, like Mulla Sadr and the late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, accepted this interpretation.

The most famous theory of universal concepts is that they are a special kind of mental concept realized with the attribute of universality in a special stage (martabah) of the mind. Hence, in one of its definitions the intellect is termed as the faculty for the apprehension of universal mental concepts. This theory is ascribed to Aristotle and has been accepted by most Islamic philosophers.

Noting that the first and second theory in fact imply the denial of intellectual perception, which is a rallying point for the destruction of metaphysics and its depreciation to philological discussion and linguistic analysis, it is necessary to delve further on this issue in order to find a firm foundation for our future discussions.

A Study of Universal Concepts

As has been pointed out, the nominalists held that general terms involve a kind of equivocation or something similar so that they may refer to numerous individuals. For this reason, in order to provide a

decisive answer to them it is necessary to explain ambiguity, wherein a common expression is used for different things (*mushtarak lafzi*), and common meanings (*mushtarak ma'nawi*).

Ambiguity (*mushtarak lafzi*) occurs when a word is given several designations or is used to designate different meanings through multiple conventions,[4] as 'spring' is used for a coil, a season, a fountain, and a leap. However, common meaning (*mushtarak ma'nawi*) occurs when an expression by a single convention designates a common aspect of numerous cases, and with a single meaning corresponds to all of them. The most important differences between ambiguity and common meaning are as follows:

1. Ambiguity requires numerous initial conventions, whereas common meaning requires no more than one initial convention.

2. Common meaning is true of a potentially infinite number of individuals or instances, whereas ambiguity is only true of a set number of meanings.

3. Common meaning is a single general meaning which is understood without a need for comparison, whereas ambiguity involves several meanings the determination of which requires determining indications [that fix the meaning].

Now, with regard to these distinctions, we shall resume our discussion of such expressions as 'man,' 'animal,' etc., to find whether each of these expressions can be understood as having a single meaning without need for a determining indication, or whether several meanings come to mind when one hears them and if there is no determining indication we remain puzzled about which of them the speaker meant.

Undoubtedly, we do not take Muhammad, 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn to be the meanings of the word 'man'; therefore, when we hear this expression we are not in doubt about the sense of this expression, asking which of these meanings it has. Rather we know that this expression has a single meaning which is common among these individuals and other men. Hence, it is not ambiguous.

Now let us see if this kind of expression has limited instances or whether it is true of an infinite number of individuals. It is obvious that the meaning of this expression does not accept any sort of limit on the number of its instances, but may be truly applied to infinite individuals.

Finally, we see that none of these expressions has an infinite number of designating conventions. No one is able to imagine in his mind an infinite number of individuals, while specifying an infinite number of designating conventions for a single expression. On the other hand, we see that we ourselves can designate a single expression in such a way that it conforms to an infinite number of individuals. Hence, universals do not require an infinite number of designating conventions.

Consequently, universal terms are a kind of those which have common meaning, not of those which are ambiguous.

One may object that this explanation is not sufficient to explain the impossibility of numerous designating conventions, for it is possible that the one who designates may imagine one instance (and not an infinity of instances) in his mind, and designate an expression for all similar individuals.

We know that this person must imagine the meanings of 'all' and 'individual' and 'similar' in order to make such a convention. Hence the question returns to how these expressions are designated. How can they be applied to an infinite number of cases?

We have no choice but to posit that the mind has the ability to conceive concepts which apply to an unlimited number of cases. Hence it is not possible for such concepts to be designated one at a time for an infinite number of instances, for this is not feasible for any human.

A Response to a Doubt

Nominalists, in order to deny the reality of universal concepts, have raised the following doubt: every concept which occurs in a mind is a particular and specific concept which differs from concepts of the same kind which occur in other minds. Even if a person conceives the same concept at another time, it will be another concept.

So, how can it be said that universal concepts occur in the mind with the attributes of universality and unity? This doubt originates from confusion between the respect of conception and the respect of existence, in other words, confusion between the principles of logic and the principles of philosophy. We have no doubt that each concept, in so far as it exists, is particular, in philosophical language, "existence is equivalent to particularity."

When it is imagined again, it will have another existence, but its conceptual universality and singularity are not due to its existence but owing to its conceptual respect, that is, the same representative aspect in relation to various people and instances.

In other words, when our minds look at a concept from the point of view of its instrumental, mirroring capacity (and not independently) and examine its capacity for correspondence in various instances, the property of universality is abstracted from it. To the contrary, when its existence is considered in the mind, it is a case of particularity.

A Survey of Other Views

Those who imagine that a universal concept is a particular vague idea, and that general terms designate these same vague and pale forms [as though the particularity had been bleached out of them], will not be able to find the truth about universals. The best way to make clear their error is to draw attention to

concepts which either do not have any real instances in the external world at all, such as 'non-existent' or 'impossible,' or which do not have material or sensible instances, such as the concepts of God, angel,

and the spirit, or which are conformable to both material and non-material instances, such as the concepts of cause and effect.

For with regard to these concepts it cannot be said that these are particular pale forms. Also, concerning concepts which are true of opposite things, such as the concept of color, which applies both to black and to white, it cannot be said that the color white has become so vague that it takes the absolute form of color and so is also true of black, or that the color black has become so weak and pale that it may also be truly applied to white.5

Platonists also have such difficulties, for most universal concepts, such as the concept of the non-existent and the impossible; do not have intelligible archetypes, so they cannot hold that the perception of universals is the observation of such intellectual and non-material truths.
Therefore, the correct position is that held by most of the Islamic philosophers and the rationalists, that man possesses a special cognitive faculty called the intellect, whose function is intellection of universal mental concepts, whether they have sensible instances or not.

1. See Parviz Morewedge, The Metaphysica of Avicenna (ibn Sina) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 321f.
2. In fact, while nominalism has attracted some positivists and their students, the official position of such logical positivists as Rudolf Carnap was that the entire debate about the existence of universals is meaningless. This claim was subsequently shown to be based on an inadequate theory of meaning. (Tr.)
3. The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl should be considered as being derived from this theory.
4. Convention' is used here in much the same way that Kripke uses 'initial baptism' for the social agreement by which a word is applied to a given kind of object. (Tr.)
5. The idea seems to be that particular vague ideas should group together things that are similar within the limits of the vagueness, as the concept of grey may be vague enough to allow for various shades. But concepts which apply to opposites do not function in this way, for black and white are not shades of color analogous to the shades of grey. Black and white are opposites, and not similar within some vague limits. (Tr.)

Lesson 15: Types of Universal Concepts

Types of Intelligibles

Universal concepts which are employed in the intellectual sciences1 are divided into three groups: (1) whatish concepts or first intelligibles such as the concept of man and the concept of whiteness; (2) philosophical concepts or secondary philosophical intelligibles, such as the concept of cause and the concept of effect; and (3) logical concepts or secondary logical intelligibles, such as conversion ('aks mustawi) and contraposition ('aks naqidh).

We should remember that there are other types of universal concepts which are used in ethics and law, and later we shall refer to them.

This tripartite division which was originated by Islamic philosophers has many uses with which we shall become familiar in future discussions. Lack of precision in recognizing and distinguishing them from one another causes' confusion and many difficulties in philosophical discussions. Most of the lapses of Western philosophers are due to confusing these concepts, examples of which can be found in the words of Hegel and Kant. Therefore it is necessary to provide some explanations about them.

Universal concepts are either predicable of entified ('ayni) things, in which case, in technical terms, it is said that they have external characterization (ittisaf khariji), as the concept of man which is predicated of Hasan, Husayn, and so on, and it is said, "Hasan is a man," or, they are not predicable of entified things but only to concepts and mental forms, in which case they are technically said to have mental characterization (ittisaf dhini), such as the concepts universal and particular (in logical terms), the first of which is an attribute of 'the concept man' and the second of which is an attribute of 'the mental form of Hasan'.

The [concepts of the] second group which are applied only to mental things are called 'logical concepts' or 'secondary logical intelligibles'.

Concepts which are predicated of external things are divided into two groups: one group is of those concepts which the mind acquires automatically from specific cases, that is to say, when one or several individual perceptions are obtained by means of the external senses or internal intuitions, immediately the intellect acquires a universal concept of them, such as the universal concept of 'whiteness', which is acquired after seeing one or several white things, or the universal concept of 'fear', which is acquired after the appearance of specific feelings once or several times. Such concepts are called whatish concepts or first intelligibles.

There is another group of concepts whose abstraction requires mental effort and comparison of things with one another, such as the concepts of cause and effect, which is abstracted by attending to the relevant relation after comparing two things such that the existence of one depends on the other.

For example, when we compare fire with the heat which comes from it, we notice the dependence of the heat on the fire. The intellect abstracts the concept of cause from the fire and the concept of effect from the heat. If there were no attention and comparison, these kinds of concepts would never be obtained.

If fire were seen thousands of times, and in the same way if heat were felt thousands of times, but no comparison were made between them, but the appearance of one from the other were not noticed, the concepts of cause and effect would never be obtained. These kinds of concepts are called 'philosophical concepts' or 'secondary philosophical intelligibles,' and in technical terms it is said:

The occurrence ('arudh) and characterization (ittisaf) of first intelligibles are both external.[2]

The occurrence ('arudh) is mental but the characterization (ittisaf) is external for secondary philosophical intelligibles. The occurrence ('arudh) and characterization (ittisaf) of secondary logical intelligibles are

both mental.

The definitions and applications of the expressions ‘mental occurrence’ and ‘external occurrence’ and likewise the designations ‘philosophical concepts’ and ‘secondary intelligibles’ are controversial. We consider these only as technical terms and justify them as was mentioned.

Characteristics of Each of the Types of Intelligibles

a. The characteristic of logical concepts is that they apply only to mental concepts and forms, and consequently they are completely recognized with a little attention. All the basic concepts of logic are of this group.

b. The characteristic of whatish concepts is that they describe the whatnesses of things and specify the limits of their existence and are like empty frameworks for existents, and therefore they may be defined as conceptual frameworks. These concepts are employed in various true sciences.

c. The characteristic of philosophical concepts is that they are not obtained without comparison and intellectual analysis. When they are applied to existents they describe types of existents (not their whatish limits), such as the concept of cause, which corresponds to fire but never specifies its specific essence, but describes the kind of relation it has with fire, which is the relation of having an effect, a relation which also exists among other things.

Sometimes this characteristic is interpreted in such a way that philosophical concepts have no entified referents, or their occurrence is mental, although this interpretation is controversial and requires justification and explication. All pure philosophical concepts are of this group.

d. Another characteristic of philosophical concepts is that there are no particular concepts or ideas for them. For example, it is not the case that in our minds there is a particular form of causality and a universal concept, and likewise for the concept of effect, and other philosophical concepts.

On the other hand, every universal concept for which there is a sensory, imaginary, or prehensive (wahmi) idea, such that the difference between them is only in universality and particularity, then it will be a whatish concept, not a philosophical concept. It is to be noted that the opposite of this characteristic does not generally hold of whatish concepts that is, it is not the case that for every whatish concept there is a sensory, imaginary or prehensive form.

For example, the concept ‘soul’ is a species concept and a whatish concept, there is no particular mental form of it, and its instance can only be intuited by presentational knowledge.

Respectival (I‘tibari) Concepts

The term i‘tibari (respectival), which frequently encountered in philosophical discussions, is employed with various meanings and is really equivocal. One must take care to distinguish among its meanings so as not to confuse them or make mistakes.

In one sense, all secondary intelligibles, whether logical or philosophical, are called i‘tibari, and even the concept of existence is counted as i‘tibari. This term is used extensively by Shaykh al-Ishraq, and in various books of his he uses ‘intellectual i‘tibari’ with this meaning.

Another sense of i‘tibari is specified for legal and ethical concepts, which in the language of recent scholars are called ‘value concepts’. In a third sense, only concepts which have no external or mental instances and which are constructed with the help of the faculty of imagination are called i‘tibari, such as the concept of a ghoul.

These concepts are also called ‘fantastic’. I‘tibari also has another sense to be contrasted with fundamentality (asalat) which is employed in discussions of the fundamentality of existence (asalat wujud) or fundamentality of whatness (asalat mahuwiyat), and which will be mentioned in its proper place.

Here it is appropriate to explain i‘tibari in the sense of value, although detailed discussion of the subject must be sought in the philosophy of ethics or the philosophy of law. We shall provide here only a brief explanation as is appropriate.

Ethical and Legal Concepts

Every ethical or legal topic which we consider consists of concepts such as ought and ought not, is required and is prohibited, and the like, which may be the predicates of propositions. Likewise other concepts, such as justice and injustice, trustworthiness and treachery can be the subjects of propositions.

When we consider these concepts we see that they are not whatish concepts, for they have no entified (‘ayni) instances, hence they are called i‘tibari. For example, the concepts of thief or usurper happen to be attributes of people, but not because they pertain to the quiddity of a person, but because the person has taken someone’s property.

When we consider the concept of property, we see that even if it is applied to gold and silver, it is not because they are metals of a specific kind, but because they are desired by people and they can be a means for meeting their needs.

From another perspective, the acquisition of property by a person is the sign of another concept called ‘possession’ which also has no external instance, that is, to credit (i‘tibar) someone with the title

‘possessor’ and to credit the gold with the title ‘possession’ does not change the essence of the person nor the essence of the gold. In conclusion, expressions of this kind have special features which must be discussed from several different perspectives.

One of these perspectives is linguistic and literary, that is, for what meaning was the term originally coined, and how has the meaning changed to have acquired its present form? Is the application of this meaning literal or figurative? Likewise one may discuss prescriptive and descriptive terms, and what the purport of prescription is, and whether ethical and legal terms refer to prescriptions or descriptions.

Discussions of this kind are related to branches of linguistics and literature, and scholars of the science of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh) also have made a great many researches and investigations into these matters.

Another aspect of discussions about these concepts is related to the ways in which these concepts are perceived, and the mechanism of transference of the mind from one concept to another, which must be examined in the psychology of mind.

Finally, another aspect of discussions about these concepts is related to their relations with objective realities, and whether these concepts have been invented by the mind and have no relation to external realities.

For example, are ‘ought’ and ‘ought not’ and other value concepts completely independent of other kinds of concepts which are constructed by means of a special mental power, or are they are merely descriptive of individual or social desires and inclinations, or are these concepts related to objective realities or somehow abstracted from them?

Are ethical and legal propositions descriptive? Do they have truth values? Can they be correct or in error? Are they prescriptive so that correctness and incorrectness are meaningless for them? In the case that truth values are imagined of them, what would be the criteria for truth and falsehood? By what standards may their truth and error be recognized? This part of the discussion is related to epistemology, and this is the area in which it must be explained.

Here we shall provide a brief explanation of the simple concepts of ethics and law, and in the final portion of the discussion of epistemology we shall deal with the evaluation of value propositions, and at the same time we shall indicate the difference between ethical and legal propositions.

Ought and Ought Not

The words ‘ought’ and ‘ought not’ which are used for cases of commands and prohibitions, in some languages are expressed by a single particle (as in Arabic, in which the letter lam indicates the command form and the word la indicates prohibition).

In every language about which we have information, we may replace the command and prohibition forms, such as ‘You ought to say it’ replaces ‘Say it’, and ‘You ought not to say it’ replaces ‘Do not say it’. However, sometimes they are used in the form of independent concepts with the meaning of ‘obligation’ and ‘prohibition’, as when we employ the descriptive sentence, ‘It is obligatory for you to say it’ instead of the prescriptive expression, ‘Say it.’

These rhetorical devices exist in many languages, but they cannot be considered as the key to solving philosophical problems. One cannot define legal expressions as those which are prescriptive, for, as has been mentioned, in place of prescriptive statements one may use descriptive sentences.

The expression ‘ought’, whether expressed as a particle or as an independent noun, and also equivalent expressions such as ‘obligatory’ and ‘necessary’, which are sometimes used in propositions which by no means express values, such as when a teacher in a laboratory says to a student, “You ought to mix sodium with chlorine to make salt,” or when a physician tells a patient, “You ought to take this medicine until you become well.”

Undoubtedly, the purport of such expressions is nothing but the exhibition of the relation between the production of a chemical substance and the action and reaction, or cause and effect, during the combining of two elements, or between taking some medicine and recovering.

In philosophical terms the ‘ought’ in these cases expresses the deductive necessity between the reason and its result or cause and effect, that is to say, if a specific event (cause) does not occur, its result (effect) will not occur.

When these expressions are used as legal or ethical terms, they gain an evaluative aspect. Here, various views are presented about them, one of which is that the purport of such terms is to express individual or social desires and their objects regarding an action. If it is expressed in the form of a descriptive sentence, it will have no other meaning than desirability.

The correct view is this that such terms do not directly indicate the object of desire but rather the value and the object of desire of an action is understood by a conditional indication. The main purport is the very expression of the relation of causality which exists between the action and the goal of ethics or law.

For example, when a lawyer says, ‘The criminal must be punished,’ even though the aim of this action is not mentioned, in reality he wants to present the relation between punishment and the goal or one of the goals of the law, that is, security for the society.

Likewise, when a moral trainer says, “A loan ought to be repaid to the creditor,” he really wants to describe the relation between this action and the goal of morality, such as the ultimate perfection of man, or eternal felicity.

For the same reason, if we ask a lawyer, “Why ought criminals to be punished?”, the answer would be,

“Because if criminals were not punished, chaos and anarchy would be imposed on the society.” Also, if we asked a moral trainer, “Why ought loans to be repaid to their creditors?”, an answer will be given appropriate to the standards accepted in ethical philosophy.

Therefore, the kind of concept of ought and moral and legal obligation is also that of the secondary philosophical intelligibles. If it is possible for other meanings to be included, or if they may be used in another way, it will be in a kind of figure of speech.

Legal and Ethical Subjects

As was mentioned, another group of concepts are used in legal and ethical propositions which include the subjects of these propositions, such as justice and injustice, ownership and marriage. There are also discussions from the point of view of lexicography and etymology, about these concepts and the changes in literal and figurative meanings, which are related to literature and linguistics.

In brief, it can be said that most of them are borrowed from whatish and philosophical concepts and used with conventional meanings in accord with the practical needs of man in individual and social contexts. For example, for the sake of controlling desires and putting limits on behavior, in general, limits are assigned the violation of which is called injustice and despotism.

The opposite is called justice and fairness, as with respect to the necessity of limiting man’s domination over property acquired in a special way; contractual domination over some pieces of property are considered as ownership.

What is noteworthy from the epistemological point of view is whether these concepts are only based on the desires of groups or individuals and have no relation to objective truth independent of the inclinations of social groups and individuals.

Consequently, either these concepts are not susceptible to intellectual analysis, or one can search for a basis for them among objective truths and external realities, and they can be analyzed and explained on the basis of cause and effect.

In this context the correct view is this. These concepts, although they are conventional and respectival in a specific sense, they are not generally without relation to external reality and outside the realm of the law of cause and effect. Their validity is based on the recognized needs of man to attain felicity and his own perfection.

This recognition, as in other cases, sometimes is correct and corresponds with reality, and sometimes is in error and opposed to reality. Possibly, one may put forth legislation for his own personal interests, and may even impose it on a society by force.

However, even then, it cannot be considered as being done capriciously and without standard. It is for

the same reason these things can be examined critically, and some conventions may be confirmed and some may be rejected. For each of them reasons and arguments can be given. If this legislation were merely an expression of personal inclinations, like a matter of individual taste in the choice of the color of one's clothing, it would never have been worthy of praise or blame. Approval and disapproval would otherwise have no meaning but agreement or disagreement in taste.

Consequently, the worth of these concepts, although dependent on convention and contract, is considered as a symbol of objectively true relations between man's actions and their results, relations which must be discovered in the behavior of man. In truth, these contractual and conventional concepts are grounded on existential relations and true welfare.

1. The intellectual sciences ('ulum 'aqli), derived from reason, are contrasted with the transmitted sciences ('ulum naqli), the revealed or literally, narrated sciences. (Tr.)
2. Mohaghegh and Izutsu translate 'aru as 'occurrence' and ittisaf as 'qualification', in The Metaphysics of Sabzavari (Tehran: Iran University Press, 1983), p. 67. Both concepts pertain to the relation between the concept and the object to which it applies, but 'aru refers to the application of the predicate concept to the object, a relational property of the predicate concept, while ittisaf refers to the qualification of the object by the concept. Any translation of these tderms is bound to be artificial, but as a memory aid the ittisaf will be called the characterization and the 'aru will be called the occurrence, indicating that the former pertains to the character of the object while the latter to the manner in which the predicate concept occurs to one who applies it to the object, in keeping with the author's explanation.

Lesson 16: Empiricism

Positivism

In the previous lessons we briefly mentioned the kinds of ideas while at the same time introducing opposing opinions held concerning them. Here we explain more fully some of the famous noteworthy positions to be found in Western sources.

We know that most of the thinkers of the West basically deny the existence of universal ideas, and so naturally they do not accept the power, by means of which these ideas are perceived, called the 'intellect'. In the present age, positivisits have not only developed the same taste, but also have gone beyond it.

They hold that true perception is limited to sense perception, to perception which is obtained as a result of contact with the sense organs by material phenomena, and which, following the cessation of the relation with the external world, remain in some weaker form.

They believe that man constructs verbal symbols for objects of perception which are similar to one another and that when he speaks or thinks, he brings to mind all cases of the same kind, or he repeats

the same verbal symbols which were posited for those cases. And in reality, thinking is a kind of mental speaking.

Hence, those which philosophers call universal ideas or intelligible concepts, in their view, are nothing but those same mental words. Only when these words directly represent objects of sense perception, and their instances can be perceived by the sense organs, and can be shown to others, are they considered as meaningful and verifiable, otherwise they are considered words without meaning.

In truth, they only accept a portion of the whatish concepts, and these only as mental words whose meanings are their particular sensory instances. However, they do not accept the secondary intelligibles, especially metaphysical concepts, not even as meaningful mental words. On this basis, they consider metaphysical topics as unscientific and absolutely meaningless.

They limit experience to sensual experience, and do not pay attention to inner experiences which are acquired through knowledge by presence. At least they are considered unscientific because in their view, the word “scientific” is only applicable to cases which can be proven for others by the senses.

In this way, positivists consider discussion of instincts and motives and other psychological matters which are perceived by inner experience as unscientific. Only external behavior is held as the subject of psychology fit for scientific discussion. Consequently, they void psychology of its content.

According to this philosophy, which can be called “empiricism” or “extreme empiricism”, there is no place for scientific discussion and research which could result in certainty about metaphysical topics. They consider all philosophical topics to be nonsense and worthless. Perhaps philosophy has never faced such a hard headed enemy. Therefore, we had better discuss it more fully.

A Critique of Positivism

Positivism, which is truly one of the basest tendencies of human thought in all history, has numerous failures, the most important of which will be indicated below:

1. With this tendency, the most firm foundations of knowledge, that is, knowledge by presence and propositions evident by reason (‘aql), are lost. With this loss no intellectual explanation can be presented for the correctness of knowledge and its correspondence to reality.

Positivists have tried to define true knowledge in another way. Truth is held to be knowledge which is accepted by others, which can be proved by sensory experience. Obviously, the change in terminology does not solve the problem of the value of knowledge. The agreement and acceptance of those who do not attend to this difficulty cannot create any value and worth.

2. Positivists rely on sense perception, which is the most unstable and dubious basis for knowledge. Sensory knowledge, more than any other type of knowledge, is exposed to error.

Noting the point that sensory knowledge, in reality, occurs inside of man, they have closed off the way to logical proof of the external world. There is no way for them to answer the doubts of the Idealists.

3. The difficulties which we mentioned with regard to the nominalists also apply to the positivists.

4. To claim that metaphysical concepts are meaningless is absurd and obviously invalid, for if words which refer to these concepts were generally devoid of meaning there would be no difference between them and nonsense, and the denial and affirmation of them would be equivalent. For example, that fire is the cause of heat could never be equivalent to its opposite. Even if one denies causality, he denies a proposition whose concepts he understands.

5. According to the positivists, there is no way for scientific laws to be regarded as universal, definite and necessary, for these characteristics do not admit of confirmation by the senses.

Cases are acceptable to them if and only if they are cases in which sensory experience is obtained (without paying heed to difficulties which arise due to the fallibility of sense perception which applies to all cases of it). That whereof sensory experience cannot be obtained, one must be silent, and one must absolutely withhold one's affirmation and denial.

6. The most important dead end down which positivists have been led is the subject of mathematics, which is explained and solved by intellectual concepts, that is, the same concepts which are meaningless in their view, as though they had been disgraced, while no sage would dare to consider the propositions of mathematics meaningless or unscientific.

Hence, a group of new positivists had no choice but to accept a kind of mental knowledge for logical concepts, and have sought to join mathematical concepts to them. This is an example of confusing logical concepts with other concepts.

It is sufficient to show the invalidity of their view to point out that mathematical concepts have instances in the external world, i.e., in technical terms, their characterization (ittisaf) is in the external world. The characteristic of logical concepts is that they do not correspond to any but mental concepts.

The Priority of Sensation or Intellect

Among Western scholars there are other forms of empiricism than positivism, which are more moderate and less fraught with difficulties. Most of them accept intellectual perception, but they still believe in some kind of priority for sense perception. Opposing them, there are other groups which believe in the priority of intellectual perception.

The subjects which are presented under the heading of 'the priority of sensation or intellect' are divided into two groups: one group is related to the evaluation of sensory and intellectual knowledge, and the preference of one over the other, and must be discussed in the lesson on the value of knowledge; the

other group relates to their relative dependence or independence from one another.

Are sensation and intellect separate and independent, or is intellectual perception integrally related to sensation? The second group of subjects may also be divided into two parts: one is related to ideas and the other to affirmations. The first subject which is discussed here is the priority of sensation or intellect with respect to ideas.

In our view, after accepting the specific form of concepts, called universals, and accepting a special conceptual power called the intellect (‘aql), this question presents itself: is the function of the intellect merely to change the form and to abstract and generalize sense perceptions, or does the intellect have independent perception, such that sensory perception at most can serve in some cases as a condition for intellectual perception?

Those who believe in the priority of sensation hold that the intellect has no function other than abstraction, generalization, and changing the form of sensory perceptions, in other words, there is no intellectual perception which does not follow upon sensory perception. Opposed to them, the Western rationalists believe that the intellect has independent perceptions which necessarily result from its existence, in other words, it is innate.

The intellect does not require any previous perceptions in order to have these intellectual perceptions. However, the correct view is that the intellectual perceptions of ideas which are universal concepts are always preceded by other particular individual perceptions. Sometimes that particular perception is an idea which results from sensation. Sometimes it is presentational knowledge which is basically not a kind of idea. In any case, the function of the intellect is not to change the form of sensory perceptions.

The second discussion is about the priority of sensation or intellect with respect to affirmations (tasdiqat). This must be considered as an independent subject which is not a function of the previous subject, for this subject turns on the question of whether after obtaining simple intellectual concepts, they follow upon sensation or are independent of sensation.

Is the judgment of unity between subject and predicate in a predicative proposition, or the judgment of accord or opposition of the antecedent and consequent in a conditional proposition, always dependent upon sensory experience? Or can the intellect, after obtaining the necessary imaginative concepts, judge independently, without need of help from sensory experience?

Therefore it is not true that one who believes in the priority of sensation with respect to ideas necessarily has the same view with respect to affirmations. Rather, it is possible for one to believe in the priority of sensation in the one case, but to believe in the priority of the intellect in the other.

Those who believe in the priority of sensation with respect to affirmations, who are usually called ‘empiricists’, believe that the intellect cannot make judgments without the help of sensory experience. Those who believe in the priority of the intellect with respect to affirmations, believe that the intellect has

certain assertive perceptions perceived by the intellect independently and without need of sensory experience.

Western rationalists usually consider these perceptions to be inherent in the intellect. They believe that the intellect was created in such a way that it understands these propositions automatically. However, the correct view is that independent intellectual affirmations either originate from presentational knowledge or are obtained through the analysis of concepts of ideas and by comparing their relations with one another.

It is only by extending the meaning of “experience” to include knowledge by presence, internal intuitions (shuhud-e batini) and psychological experiences that one can consider all intellectual affirmations to require experience. In any case, intellectual affirmations do not always require sensory experience or the employment of the sense organs.

The result is that neither the opinions of the empiricists nor the rationalists, whether with respect to ideas or affirmations, are exclusively correct. The correct view regarding each case is a certain sense of the priority of the intellect. In the case of ideas, it means that intellectual concepts are not the same as the changed forms of sensory ideas. In the case of affirmations, it means that the intellect does not require sensory experience to make its own specific judgments.

Lesson 17: The Role of the Intellect and Sensation in Ideas

The Fundamentality of the Intellect or Sensation for Ideas

As we have mentioned, Western philosophers may be divided into two groups with regard to the explanation of the appearance of ideas.

One group believes that the intellect perceives a series of concepts without need for sensation, like Descartes believed with regard to the concepts of God and soul, from among the immaterial things, and length and shape from among the material things. He calls these kinds of qualities of materials which are not perceived directly from sensation ‘primary qualities’.

To the contrary, he called qualities such as color, smell and taste, which are perceived by sensation ‘secondary qualities’. In this way he believed in a kind of priority of the intellect. He considered the perception of secondary qualities which are obtained by means of the senses to be fallible and unreliable. In this way, he proved another kind of priority of the intellect, which is related to the

discussion of the value of knowledge.

Likewise, Kant related a series of concepts called ‘a priori’ to the mind. From among them he related the concepts of space and time to the levels of sensation, and he related the twelve categories to the level of understanding. He considered the understanding of these concepts to be essential innate qualities of the mind.

The other group believes that the mind of man is created like a blank slate, with no engraving on it, and that contact with external existents by means of the sense organs causes the appearance of images and engravings on it. In this way various perceptions occur. Epicures are reported to have said, “There is nothing in the intellect unless it has previously been in sensation.” The very same phrase was repeated by John Locke, the English empiricist.

However, their statements about the appearance of intellectual concepts differ. The apparent meaning of some of them is that sensory perceptions are changed in shape and transformed to intellectual perceptions by the intellect, just as a carpenter cuts pieces of wood to make them into various shapes and build a table, chair, door or window.

So, intellectual concepts are the very sensory forms whose shapes have been changed. The statements of some others may be interpreted to mean that sensory perceptions provide the grounds and capital for intellectual perceptions, although this is not to say that sensory forms are really changed to intellectual concepts.

The Table of the Categories

	Judgment	Category	Example
Quantity	Universal	Unity	All men are mortal.
	Particular	Plurality	Some men are philosophers.
	Singular	Totality	Socrates was a sage.
Quality	Affirmative	Reality	Man is mortal.
	Negative	Negation	The spirit is not mortal.
	Infinite	Limitation	The spirit is non–material.
Relation	Categorical	Of inherence and subsistence	God is just.
	Hypothetical	Of causality and dependence	If God is just to people, He will give rewards and punishments.
	Disjunctive	Of community	Byzantium was the greatest nation of ancient Europe.
Modality	Problematical	Possibility—Impossibility	Some planets may have living things on them.
	Assertorical	Existence—Nonexistence	The earth is round.
	Apodeictical	Necessity—Contingency	God is necessarily just.

We mentioned previously that extreme empiricist, such as the positivists, basically deny the existence of intellectual concepts, and they interpret them as forms of mental words.

Some empiricists, such as the French Condiac, limit experiences which cause the appearance of mental concepts to sense experience. Others, such as the English John Locke, extend them to inner experiences. Among them Berkeley has an exceptional position, and he limits experiences to inner experience, for he denies the existence of material things. On this basis, sensory experience is not possible.

We must add that most empiricists, especially those who accept internal experiences, do not limit the realm of knowledge to the material, and they prove metaphysical matters by the intellect. Although, according to the doctrine of the fundamentality of sensation, and the complete dependence of mental conceptions on sensory conception, such belief is not very logical. The denial of metaphysics is also without reason. Because of this, Hume, who had noticed this point, considered cases which cannot be directly experienced as dubious.

It is clear that extensive detailed criticism of both tendencies would require a separate and weighty text, so that the statements of each thinker could be reported and examined, but this work is not appropriate in this book. Hence, it suffices to briefly criticize their basic ideas without regard to the particular features of each position.

Critique

1. It is not acceptable to assume that from the beginning of its existence the intellect has specific concepts, and that it is mixed with them, or that after a while it understands them automatically and without the effect of any other factor. The conscience of every aware human being denies this, whether the assumed concepts are related to the material or related to the abstract, or whether it accords with both areas.

2. Supposing that a series of concepts are necessary for the nature and constitution of the intellect, it cannot be proved that they represent reality, and at most it can be said that a certain subject is accepted by the nature of the intellect, and it is probable that if the intellect had been created in another form, it would have perceived objects in other ways.

To compensate for this deficiency, Descartes grasped hold of divine wisdom. He said that if God had placed these concepts in the nature of the intellect, contrary to reality and truth, he necessarily would have been a deceiver. However, it is clear that the attributes of Almighty God, and His lack of deception must be proved by intellectual reasons. But if intellectual perceptions are not correct the basis of this argument collapses. The guarantee of its correctness through this argument is circular.

3. Suppose that intellectual concepts came from a change in sensory forms. This would require that a form which changes and is transformed into an intellectual concept would not retain its original form, however, with the appearance of universal concepts in the mind; concomitantly and simultaneously we see that sensory and imaginary forms retain their own states. Moreover, it is only material existents

which are apt to change, while perceptual forms are abstract, as will be proved in its proper place.

4. Most of the intellectual concepts, such as the concept of cause and effect, do not have sensory or imaginary forms at all, so they cannot be said to come from changes in sensory forms.

5. Suppose that sensory forms provide the stock and ground for intellectual concepts, and that they do not really change into them. Although this is less problematic and closer to the truth [than the previous supposition], and is acceptable with respect to some whatish concepts, nevertheless, it is not proper to limit the grounds of intellectual concepts to sensory perceptions.

For example, it cannot be said that philosophical concepts are obtained from abstraction and generalization of sensory perceptions, because, as has already been pointed out, there does not exist any sensory or imaginal perceptions equivalent to them.

Inquiry into a Problem

In order to become clear about the role of sense and intellect in ideas, we shall take a glance at the types of concepts and the way in which they appear.

When we open our eyes to the beautiful scenery of a garden, the different colors of the flowers and leaves attract our attention. Various perceptual forms are pictured in our minds. When we close our eyes, we no longer see the beautiful dazzling colors, and this is the same sensory perception which vanishes when the relation to the external world is cut. However, we can imagine the same flowers in our mind, and remember that beautiful scenery. This is imaginary perception.

In addition to sensory and imaginary forms which represent specific things, we also perceive a series of universal concepts which do not describe specific things, such as the concepts of green, red, yellow, purple, indigo, etc. Likewise the concept of color itself, which can be applied to various different colors, cannot be considered as the faded and vague form of one of them.

Obviously, if we had not seen the color of the leaves of trees and things of the same color, we could envisage neither imaginary forms nor intellectual concepts of them. So, one who is blind cannot imagine colors and one who has no sense of smell has no concept of the various fragrances. Because of this, it is said, “He who lacks a sense lacks a knowledge,” that is, someone who lacks a sense is deprived of a kind of concept and awareness.

So undoubtedly, the appearance of this kind of universal concept depends on the occurrence of particular perceptions. But this does not mean that sensory perceptions are transformed into intellectual perceptions like wood into a chair, or material to energy, or like a specific kind of energy is transformed into another kind, for, as we have said, this kind of transformation requires that the initial state of the thing transformed does not remain while particular perceptions can remain after the appearance of the intellectual concepts.

Moreover, transformations are basically material, while perceptions are absolutely abstract, as will be proved in its proper place, God willing. Therefore, the role of the senses in the creation of this kind of universal concept is only that of a basis or necessary condition.

There is another group of concepts which has no relation to sensible things, but rather describe psychological states, states which are perceived with presentational knowledge and inner experience, such as the concepts of fear, affection, enmity, pleasure and pain.

Undoubtedly, if we did not have inner feelings, we could never perceive their universal concepts. So, a child cannot understand some adult forms of pleasure until after it reaches maturity, and prior to that it has no specific concept of them. Therefore, this group of concepts is also in need of prior individual perceptions, but not perceptions which are acquired with the help of sensory organs. Therefore, sensory experience has no role in the acquisition of this group of whatish concepts.

On the other hand, we have a series of concepts which have no instances in the external world, and only have instances in the mind, such as the concept “universal”, which corresponds to other mental concepts, and there is nothing outside of the mind which can be called “universal” with the meaning of a concept applicable to numerous individuals.

It is clear that this kind of concept is not obtained by abstraction and generalization from sensory perceptions, although a kind of mental experience is needed, that is, until a series of intellectual concepts is acquired by the mind, we cannot discuss whether they are applicable to numerous individuals or not.

This is the very mental experience which we have indicated. That is, the mind of man has the power to be aware of concepts within itself, and to recognize them just as he does the objects of the external world, and has the power to abstract specific concepts from them. The instances of these abstracted concepts are the same as the primary concepts. This is why these kinds of concepts which are used in logic are called “secondary logical intelligibles”.

Finally, we arrive at another chain of intellectual concepts, which are used in philosophy, from which primary self-evident propositions are formed, and hence, these concepts have great importance. Various opinions have been presented with regard to the formation of these concepts, discussion of which would take too much time, but in the discussion of ontology we shall speak of the conditions for the formation of each of these relevant concepts.

Here we shall only present as much as is necessary. It is to be noted that these concepts, since they are applied to things in the external world, or in technical terms, their characterization (ittisaf) is external, they are like whatish concepts, but since they do not describe specific whatnesses, and in technical terms, their occurrence (‘arudh) is mental, they are like logical concepts. For this reason they are sometimes confused with these two other groups of concepts. This very mistake is made by the great thinkers, especially Western philosophers.

We have already learned that we recognize our own selves and our psychological states or mental forms and actions of the soul, such as our decisions, with presentational knowledge. We now add that man is able to compare each aspect of the self with the self itself, without paying any attention to the whatnesses of either of them, but by paying attention to their existential relations, and finding that the self can exist without any of them.

However, none of them could occur without the self. By attending to this relation it may be judged that each aspect of the soul requires the self, but the self does not require them, but is self-sufficient, needless and independent. On this basis, the mind abstracts the concept of cause from the self and the concept of effect from each of these mentioned aspects.

Clearly, sensory perceptions play no role in the formation of the concepts of need, independence, self-sufficiency, cause and effect. The abstraction of these concepts does not originate with the sensory perception of their instances. Even knowledge by presence and inner experience relating to each of them are not sufficient for the abstraction of the concepts related to them.

Rather, comparison between them is necessary, and the specific relation between them must be taken into consideration, and for this reason it is said that these concepts do not have objective equivalents, although their characterization (ittisaf) is external.

In conclusion, every intellectual concept requires a prior individual perception, a perception which provides the grounds for the abstraction of a concept of a species. This perception, in some cases, is a sensory perception, and in other cases is knowledge by presence and inner intuitions.

Therefore, the role of sensation in the formation of universal concepts is only that of providing the grounds for one group of whatish concepts. It is the intellect that plays the basic role in the formation of all universal concepts.

Lesson 18: The Role of the Intellect and Sensation in Affirmations

Points about Affirmations

Before speaking about the role of the senses and the intellect in affirmations (tasdiqat) it is necessary to make some points about affirmations and propositions, points which are related to logic. We shall discuss them here briefly and to the extent necessary.

1. As was indicated in the definition of idea, each idea has no more than a capability to show that which is beyond itself, that is, imagining a specific matter or a universal concept does not mean that what corresponds to it actually takes place. This capability for real representation becomes actual when it takes the shape of a proposition and affirmation, which consists of judgment and represents belief in its purport.

For example, the concept of 'man' by itself does not denote the occurrence of man in the external world. But when it is combined with the concept of 'existent' and the relation of unity, it gives it the form of an affirmation, whose actuality is to be discovered in the external world, that is, one can consider this proposition, "Man exists," as a proposition which describes the external world.

At least two concepts are obtained even from simple presentational knowledge, which is never compound or multiple (such as the feeling of fear), when reflected in the mind: one is the whatish concept of fear, and the other the concept of being, and by their composition they are reflected in the form of "There is fear," and sometimes by adding other concepts, it takes the form of "I am afraid," or "I have fear."

It must be noted that sometimes an idea which seems to be simple and without judgment really breaks down to an affirmation, for example, the purport of this proposition, "Man searches for truth," is this, that man, who is an existent in the external world, has the property of searching for truth.

So, in reality, the subject of the proposition, 'man', which apparently is a simple idea, breaks down into this proposition, "Man is an existent in the external world," and so the predicate, 'searches for truth' applies to this. This sort of proposition which breaks down into implied components is called by logicians 'aqd al-wadh'.

2. The subject of a proposition sometimes is a particular idea which refers to a specific existent, such as "Everest is the highest mountain in the world," and sometimes a universal concept and applies to an infinite number of instances.

In the second case, it is sometimes a whatish concept, such as "Metals expand when heated," and it is sometimes a philosophical concept, such as "An effect without a cause does not come into existence," and it is sometimes a logical concept, such as "The contradictory of a universal negative is a particular affirmative."

3. In classical logic, propositions are divided into two forms, predications and conditionals. Predications are composed of subjects and predicates and the relation between them is 'unity', such as, "Man is a thinker." Conditionals are composed of antecedent and consequent, and the relation between them is either necessary, such as, "If a plane figure is triangular, then the sum of its angles is equal to that of two right angles," or it is one of exclusive disjunction (ta'anud), such as "A number is either even or odd," that is, if a number is even, it will not be odd, and if it is odd, it will not be even.

However, other forms also may be imagined for propositions, and all of them may be returned to predications. [All propositions are composed of predicational propositions.]

4. The relation between subject and predicate sometimes has the attribute of 'contingency' (imkan), such as in this proposition: "One human individual is bigger than another individual." Sometimes the attribute is necessary, such as in this proposition: "Each whole is larger than its parts." Logicians call these attributes 'the matter of the proposition' (maddah qadhiyyah). When these attributes are explicitly mentioned in a proposition, they are called the 'mode of the proposition' (jahat qadhiyyah).

The matter of a proposition is usually mentioned implicitly, and is not an element of it, although the predicate may be assimilated to the subject, and the matter or mode of the proposition takes the form of a predicate and an element of the proposition.

For example, in the above proposition one may say, "One human individual's exceeding the size of another is possible," and "A whole's exceeding the size of its parts is necessary." This kind of proposition is really a representative of the quality of the relationship of the subject and predicate of another proposition.

5. The unity considered to be between a subject and predicate sometimes is a conceptual unity, such as, "Man is human," and sometimes it is a unity of instance, such as, "Man searches for truth," in which the subject and predicate do not have a conceptual unity, but they are united by instance. The first kind is called "primary predication" (haml awwali) and the second kind is called "common predication" (haml shayi').

6. In common predication the predicate of the proposition is 'existent' or the equivalent, and the proposition is termed a 'simple question' (halliyyah basitah) whereas in other cases it is termed a 'compound question' (halliyyah murakkabah).[1] The first is like, "Man is an existent," and the second like, "Man searches for truth."

The acceptance of simple questions depends on this, the concept of "existence" must be accepted in terms of a independent concept which may be predicated (predicative concept). But most of the Western philosophers accept the concept of existence only as a nominal concept which is not independent. Discussion of this may be found in the part on ontology.

7. In compound questions, if the concept of the predicate is obtained through analysis of the concept of the subject, the proposition is called 'analytic', and otherwise it is called 'synthetic'.

For example, the proposition, "All children have fathers," is analytic, for when the concept of child is analyzed, the concept of father is obtained from it. But the proposition, "Metals expand when heated," is synthetic, for from the analysis of the meaning of 'metal' we cannot obtain the concept of expansion.

In the same way, the proposition, "All men have fathers," is synthetic, for from the analysis of the

meaning of ‘man’ the concept of ‘having a father’ is not obtained. Also, “Every effect requires a cause,” is analytic, and “All existents require a cause,” is synthetic.

It must be noted that Kant has divided the synthetic propositions into two kinds, a priori and a posteriori, and considers mathematical propositions to belong to the former. However, some positivists attempt to reduce them to analytic propositions.

8. In classical logic, propositions are divided into self-evident and theoretical (non-self-evident). Propositions are self-evident whose affirmation does not require thinking and reasoning, while theoretical propositions are those whose affirmation requires thinking and reasoning.

Self-evident propositions are divided in to two subdivisions: primary self-evident propositions, whose affirmation does not require anything except the exact imagining of the subject and predicate, such as the proposition of the impossibility of the unity of contradictories, which is called ‘the mother of all propositions’.

The other is secondary self-evident propositions whose affirmation depends on the use of sensory organs, or things other than the imagination of the subject and predicate. They are divided into six groups: those pertaining to the senses, to conscience, to speculation, to innate constitution, to experience, and to testimony.

The truth of the matter is that not all of these propositions are self-evident. Only two groups may really be considered to be self-evident. First, the primary self-evident propositions, and seconds, those pertaining to consciences, which are the mental reflections of knowledge by presence.

Those pertaining to speculation and innate constitution are merely close to being self-evident propositions. The other propositions must be considered theoretical and in need of argument, and they will be discussed in the [following] lesson on “The Value of Knowledge”.

Inquiry about a Problem

Although the problem of the priority of sense or intellect is not usually discussed independently, we can discover the views of the rationalists and empiricists by considering the origins of these schools.

For example, the positivists, who limit real knowledge to sensory knowledge, are naturally, if stubbornly, on the side of the priority of the senses with regard to this problem, as well. They consider every non-empirical proposition to be either meaningless or of no scientific value. Some empiricists place more moderate emphasis on the role of sensory experience, and they more or less accept a role for the intellect.

However, the rationalists emphasize the importance of the role of the intellect, and they more or less believe in propositions independent of experience. For example, Kant, in addition to considering analytic

propositions to be without need for experience, also considered one group of synthetic propositions, including all the problems of mathematics, to be prior to experience and without need of it.

In order that our discussion not become too lengthy, our review will not include discussions of every empiricist and rationalist scholar, and we shall simply explain the correct view of this problem.

With regard to the fact that in primary self-evident propositions precise imagination of the subject and predicate is sufficient for a judgment of their unity, it becomes quite clear that this kind of affirmation does not require sensory experience, even if the imagination of the subject and predicate requires sensory experience.

The problem is that after the subject and predicate are imagined exactly—whether this imagination depends on the use of the sense organs or not—does the application of the predicate to the subject require the use of the senses or not? It is assumed that in primary self-evident propositions that the mere imagination of subject and predicate is sufficient for the intellect to judge their unity.

The same judgment applies to all analytical propositions, for in these propositions the concept of the predicate is obtained from the analysis of the concept of the subject. Obviously, the analysis of a concept is a mental affair and without need for sensory experience. The application of predicates which are obtained from their subjects is also necessary, and is like "thubut al-shay' li nafsih" (the attribution of the thing to itself).

The same judgment also applies to primary predications, and requires no further discussion.
Likewise the propositions which are obtained through reflection in the mind of presentational knowledge (inner experiences (wijdaniyyat)) have no need for sensory experience at all, for in these propositions even imaginative concepts are also obtained from knowledge by presence, and sensory experience is not relevant to them at all.

With regard to the fact that mental forms in whatever shape—whether sensory, imaginary, or intellectual—are understood with knowledge by presence, affirmation of their existence, as actions and reactions of the soul, is a kind of inner experience and does not require sensory experience, even if without obtaining sensory experience some of them, such as sensory forms, would not be acquired.

However, after acquiring them, and after the mind analyzes them into existential and whatish concepts, does the judgment of the unity of these concepts which include the subject and predicate of a proposition require sensory experience? It is obvious that the judgment of simple questions which are related to matters of inner experience does not require the use of the sensory organs, but it is a self-evident judgment, and signifies infallible presentational knowledge.

As to affirmation of the existence of instances of sensible things in the external world—although according to some it is obtained at the moment of the occurrence of sensory experience—with attention it becomes evident that the fixation of judgment requires intellectual proof, as the great Islamic

philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra, and ‘Allamah Tabataba’i have explained, because sensory forms do not guarantee correctness and complete correspondence with instances in the external world.

Therefore, it is only in this kind of proposition that sensory experience plays a role, but not a complete and definitive role, but rather an indirect and preparatory role.

Likewise, in universal sensory propositions, which in the terminology of logicians are called “experiences” or “experienced things”, in addition to requiring the mentioned intellectual judgment for affirming their external instances, there is another requirement for an intellectual proof of the generalization and proof of their universality, as was mentioned in lesson nine.

The reconfirming of knowledge in every proposition and science, due to the necessity of its purport and the impossibility of its contradictory, requires the ‘mother of propositions’ (umm al-qadhaya), that is, the proposition of theimpossibility of bringing two contradictories together (ijtima‘ naqidhayn).

In conclusion, no certain affirmation is obtained merely by sensory experience, but there are numerous certain propositions which do not need sensory experience. By attending to this truth, the poverty of the thought of the positivists becomes quite clear.

1. The term ‘question’ here does not indicate an interrogative. Simple and compound questions are merely two kinds of propositions. Simple questions are propositions that posit the existence of something, as in “A exists,” or “A is.” Compound questions are statements in which one thing is affirmed of another, e.g., “A is B.” (Tr.)

Lesson 19: The Value of Knowledge

Return to the Original Problem

We know that the original problem of epistemology is whether man is able to discover the truth and obtain information about reality. If so, how? What is the criterion by which one can recognize the truth from incorrect thoughts which are contrary to reality? In other words, the main fundamental discussions of epistemology include the problem of ‘the value of knowledge’, and other problems are considered to be introductory or supplementary.

Since there are several kinds of knowledge, it is natural that the problem of the value of knowledge should also have different dimensions. But what is of special importance for philosophy is the evaluation of intellectual knowledge and the proof of the ability of the intellect to solve the problems of epistemology and other branches of philosophy.

We first explained the general types of knowledge, and we came to the conclusion that a sort of human

knowledge is without intermediary and is knowledge by presence. In other words, it is finding reality itself. In this kind of knowledge error is impossible. But with regard to the fact that this knowledge by itself does not meet the scientific needs of man we discussed acquired knowledge and its types. We also made clear the role of the senses and the intellect in them.

Now it is time to return to the original problem and explain the value of acquired knowledge. As acquired knowledge, in the sense of the actual discovery of reality, is the same as affirmations and propositions, naturally, the evaluation of acquired knowledge is accomplished in their area. If ideas are mentioned it will be indirectly and as the components of propositions.

What is Truth?

A fundamental problem about the value of knowledge is how to prove that human knowledge corresponds to reality. This difficulty appears in case there is an intermediary between the knower and the known. Because of that, the knower is the one to whom knowledge is attributed, and the known is the one to which being known is attributed.

In other words, knowledge is other than that which is known, but in case there is no intermediary, and the knower finds the objective existence of the known, naturally such questions will not arise.

Therefore, knowledge which is capable of truth—that is, which corresponds to reality—and is capable of error—that is, which differs from reality—that very knowledge is acquired knowledge. And if truth is attributed to knowledge by presence, this is in the sense of a denial of the possibility of its being in error.

Meanwhile, the definition of truth, which is discussed under the topic of the value of knowledge, is known, that is, it is the correspondence of the form of knowledge with the reality which it describes.

However, there may be other definitions of truth, such as the definition of the pragmatists, “Truth is a thought which is useful in the practical life of man,” or the definition of the relativists, “Truth is knowledge which is appropriate to a healthy perceptual apparatus,” or a third definition, which says, “Truth is that upon which all people agree,” or a fourth definition, which says, “Truth is knowledge which can be proved by sensory experience.”

All of these are besides the point of the discussion, and avoid answering the original problem about the value of knowledge. They can be considered as signs of the inability of the definers to solve this problem.

Supposing that some of them are correctly justified, or they are considered as the definitions necessary for specific cases (even if the definition itself is not correct), that is, they are considered as specific signs of some truth, or they indicate some specific terminology, but in any case, it must be noted that none of these justifications are able to solve our original problem.

The question about the truth in the sense of knowledge which corresponds to reality is left unanswered, and requires a correct and clarifying answer.

Criteria for the Recognition of the Truth

The rationalists hold that the standard for recognizing the truth is 'the nature of the intellect' (fitrat-e 'aql). The propositions which are inferred correctly from self-evident propositions and which are really components of them are considered to be truth, while sensory and experiential propositions are considered valid to the extent that they are proved by the aid of intellectual arguments.

However, we do not see any explanation given by them of the correspondence of self-evident propositions and innate propositions (fitriyyat) with realities, except the one mentioned by Descartes, who resorted to the wisdom and honesty of God with respect to innate thoughts. The weakness of this is clear as was mentioned in the seventeenth lesson.

There is no doubt at all that the intellect, after imagining the subject and predicate of self-evident propositions, automatically and without need for experience, definitively judges their unity. Those who have raised doubts about this proposition either have not correctly imagined the subject and predicate or are affected with a kind of illness or scruples.

But our discussion pertains to the following: whether this so-called innate kind of understanding is requisite of the way in which man's intellect has been created, so that it would be possible for the intellect of another existent (for example, the intellect of a jinn) to understand the very same propositions but in another form, or if man's intellect were created in another way would it understand matters in a different form, or whether these understandings correspond perfectly to reality and are representatives of things in themselves, and any other existent which also had an intellect would understand the same forms.

Plainly, what it means for intellectual knowledge to have real value and to be true is the latter, but its mere innateness (assuming that it is here interpreted in the correct way) does not prove the matter.

On the other hand, empiricists hold that the standard for the truth of knowledge is capability of being proved by means of experience, and some of them have added that it must be proved by practical experience.

However, it is clear that first of all this standard is only applicable to sensory things and cases which are susceptible to practical experience. Matters of logic and pure mathematics cannot be evaluated by this standard. Secondly, the results of sensory and practical experience must be understood by means of acquired knowledge. Exactly the same question will be repeated regarding what guarantees the correctness of acquired knowledge, and by what standard can its truth be distinguished.

Inquiry into a Problem

The main point of difficulty regarding acquired knowledge is how it can be determined when there is correspondence, while it is this very form of cognition and acquired knowledge that serves as the means of our relation to the external world.

Therefore, the key to this problem must be sought where we are able to have an overview of both the form of understanding and that which is concomitant with it and we can understand their correspondence by presence and without any other intermediary. Those are propositions of inner sense, which on the one hand we find by presence concomitant with cognition, for example, the very state of fear, and on the other hand, we perceive the mental form related to it directly.

Therefore, the propositions, “I am”, or “I am afraid”, or “I doubt”, are completely indubitable. So, these propositions (propositions of inner sense) are the first propositions whose value is hundred percent proven, and there is no way for them to be in error. To be sure, we must take care that these propositions are not mixed with mental interpretations, as was mentioned in lesson thirteen.

We find such an overview in the propositions of logic, which describe other mental forms and concepts. For although both the description and the object described are found in two levels of the mind, both levels are present to the self (i.e., the I who understands).

For example, this proposition, “The concept of man is a universal concept” is a proposition which describes the features of ‘the concept of man’, a concept which is present in the mind. We are able to distinguish these features by mental experience that is without using sensory organs or the intermediary of any other perceptual form.

We understand that this concept does not describe a specific individual, but is applicable to numerous individuals. So, the proposition “The concept of man is a universal concept” is true.

By this means the way is open for the recognition of two groups of propositions, but these are not sufficient for the cognition of all acquired knowledge. If we are able to obtain a guarantee of the correctness of primary self-evident propositions we would be completely successful, for in their rays we can recognize and evaluate theoretical propositions such as the sensory and experiential propositions.

For the sake of this task we must pay careful attention to the whatnesses of these propositions. On the one hand, we must examine the concepts employed in them and consider what kind of concepts they are, and how they are obtained. On the other hand, we must look at the relations among them and consider how the intellect is able to judge the unity of their subjects and predicates.

The first aspect has been made clear in lesson seventeen. We know that these propositions are formed of philosophical concepts, concepts which terminate in presentational knowledge. That is, the first group of philosophical concepts, such as ‘need’ and ‘independence’ and then ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ are

abstracted from direct knowledge and inner sense. We find their correspondence with the source of their abstraction by presence. Some philosophical concepts also reduce to them.

The second aspect that is the qualities of judgment of unity between their subjects and predicates becomes clear with comparison between the subjects and predicates of these propositions with each other. The means that all of these propositions are analytical, the concept of whose predicates is obtained from the analysis of the concept of their subjects.

For example, in this proposition, “Every effect requires a cause”, when we analyze the concept of effect we arrive at the conclusion that an effect is an existent whose existence is based on another existent, that is, it needs another existent, which is called the cause. Therefore the concept of need for a cause is implicit in the concept of effect. Their unity is found by mental experience.

To the contrary, in the proposition “Every existent requires a cause,” because from the analysis of the concept of ‘existent’ the concept of ‘requires a cause’ is not obtained, we cannot consider it a self-evident proposition. But it is also not a true speculative proposition.

In this way it becomes clear that primary self-evidence also terminates in knowledge by presence, and so they find the way to the guarantee of their truth.

A problem may be raised, that if what we find by presentational knowledge is a specific effect, how can we generalize judgments regarding it to every effect and consider such a universal judgment to be self-evident?

The answer is that although we abstract the concept of effect from a specific phenomenon, like that of our own will, it is not for that reason a specific essence, and, for example, to be considered from among the kinds of qualities of the soul, but it is because its existence is related to the existence of another.

So, everywhere this quality is found this judgment is also established. Of course, the confirmation of this quality for other cases requires intellectual proof. For this reason this proposition by itself cannot establish the requirement of material phenomena for a cause, unless an intellectual proof of their existential relationship can be provided.

God willing, we will explain their proofs in the lesson on cause and effect. With the same proposition we also can judge that everywhere there is an existential relationship, the terms and relation can be established, and so, the existence of the cause.

In conclusion, the secret of the infallibility of primary self-evident propositions is their dependence on knowledge by presence.

The Criteria of Truth and Falsity of Propositions

With our explanation about the standard of truth it became clear that self– evident propositions, such as primary self–evident propositions and propositions of inner sense have the value of certainty. The secret of their infallibility is that the correspondence between the knowledge and the object of the knowledge is proved through presentational knowledge.

Propositions which are not self– evident are to be evaluated by logical standards, that is, if a proposition is obtained according to the logical rules of inference, it is true; otherwise it will be incorrect.

Of course, it must be noted that the incorrectness of a reason does not always signify the incorrectness of the conclusion, for it is possible to prove something which is correct by using reasons which are incorrect. Therefore, the invalidity of an argument only provides a reason for lack of confidence in the conclusion, not a reason for its actual error.

It is possible that a doubt may be raised here. According to the definition of truth as knowledge which corresponds to reality, truth and error are to be found only with regard to propositions which may be compared to reality in the external world. Metaphysical propositions, however, do not have an external reality to which they could correspond. Hence, they cannot be considered as true or false, but it must be said that they are absurd and meaningless.

This doubt arises from the assumption that external objective reality is equivalent to material reality. In order to remove this doubt it is to be noted that, first of all, external objective reality is not limited to material reality, but also includes the abstract; furthermore, it will be proven in the appropriate place that the abstract participates in reality to a greater extent than does the material.

Secondly, the reality which is meant is that to which propositions must correspond, the absolute referent of propositions; and by the external world is meant that which is beyond the concepts about them, even if that reality and referent is in the mind, or is psychological; and as we have explained, purely logical propositions describe other mental things.

The relationship between the level of the mind which is the place of the referents of these propositions and the level from which they are viewed is like the relationship between that which is outside the mind and the mind.

Therefore, the general criterion of the truth and falsity of propositions is their correspondence or lack of correspondence with the concepts beyond them, that is, the recognition of the truth and falsity of propositions of the empirical sciences is the comparison of them with the material reality to which they are related, for example, in order to discover the truth of the proposition,

“Iron expands when heated”, we heat iron in the external world, and observe the difference in its size, but logical propositions must be evaluated by means of other mental concepts which are related to them.

In order to recognize the truth or falsity of philosophical propositions, one must consider the relation between the mind and its object, that is, their being correct is that their objective referents, whether material or abstract, must be such that the mind abstracts the concepts related to them.

This evaluation is accomplished directly in the case of propositions of inner sense, and for other propositions it is accomplished with one or more intermediaries, as was explained.

The Case Itself (Nafs al-Amr)

We come across this expression in the language of most philosophers that a certain matter corresponds to "the case itself". Among these are 'true propositions' some of which do not have any instances for their subjects in the external world. If supposing an instance to be existent, the predicate applies to it, such a proposition will be true.

It is said that the criterion of truth for these propositions is their correspondence with the case itself, for not all their instances exist in the external world, so that we may evaluate the correspondence between the purport of the propositions with them, and say that they correspond to the external world.

Likewise with regard to propositions which are formed of secondary intelligibles, such as logical propositions and propositions which apply to judgments about nonexistent objects or impossible objects, it is said that the criterion for their truth is their correspondence to a thing in itself.

With regard to the meaning of this expression, there are several accounts which are either very artificial, such as the saying of some philosophers that the word 'amr' (case) is the world of the abstract, or they do not solve the problem, such as the saying that what is meant by 'nafs al-amr' is the thing itself, for the question is left unanswered that at last for the evaluation of these propositions, with what are they to be evaluated?

With the explanation of the truth and falsity of propositions it became clear that the meaning of nafs al-amr is something other than external reality, rather it is a container for the intellectual demonstration of reference which differs in various cases. In some cases it is a specific level of the mind, such as with regard to logical propositions.

In other cases it is the assumption of an external demonstration, such as the referent of the proposition of the impossibility of the unity of contradictories. In cases in which there is an accidental relation in the external world, such as when it is said, "The cause of the absence of the effect is the absence of the cause," it is established that the relation of causality in truth is between the existence of the cause and the existence of the effect, and accidentally it is also related to their absence.

Lesson 20: The Evaluation of Ethical and Legal Propositions

Features of Ethical and Legal Knowledge

Knowledge of ethics and law, sometimes called ‘evaluative knowledge’, has features which can be divided into two general groups. One group of features is related to specific imaginative concepts, from which legal and ethical terms are formed. This was discussed in Lesson Fifteen. The other group of features concerns the shape and form of evaluative terms.

Legal and ethical knowledge may thus be explained in two ways: one is in the form of prescriptions and commands and prohibitions, as is seen in may verses of the Noble Qur’an; and the other is in descriptive form, the from of propositions which have the logical forms of subjects and predicates or antecedent and consequent, which is employed in other verses and narrations.

We know that prescriptive expressions are not propositions and do not have truth values, so one should not ask whether they are true or false. If one does ask this question, the answer is neither one nor the other, but it is simply prescriptive.

Indeed, with respect to commands and prohibitions, it may be said that they potentially indicate the desirability of the object commanded for the one who commands, or the undesirability of the object of prohibition for the one who prohibits, and because of this potential indication, they may be said to be true or false.

If the object of command is really desired by the one who commands and the object of prohibitions is really detested by the one who issues the prohibition, the prescriptive expressions, according to what they potentially indicate, are true, and otherwise they are false.

Some Western thinkers have imagined that the consistency of ethical and legal rules is based on command, prohibition, obligation and warning, in other words, that their essence is prescriptive. Therefore, ethical and legal knowledge is not considered to have truth value. Naturally, they believe that there is no standard for their truth or falsity, and that no criterion for recognizing their truth or error can be produced.

This idea is wrong. Without a doubt, ethical and legal rules can be expressed in the form of descriptive expressions and logical propositions without prescriptive meaning. In reality, to try to fit ethical and legal knowledge into the framework of prescriptive expressions is either to consider them to be a sort of mental diversion or to be solely for the sake of meeting certain educational goals.

The Criterion for the Truth and Falsity of Evaluative Propositions

Ethical and legal propositions are explained in two ways: the first way is by describing the application of specific rules in a certain system. For example, it is said, “Lying for the purpose of reconciliation is permitted in Islam,” or “Cutting the hand of a thief in Islam is obligatory,” and when a jurist or Muslim judge explains such precepts he does not need mention the ethical or legal system of Islam. Hence, the expression “according to Islam” is not usually employed.

The criterion for the truth and falsity of such propositions is their correspondence or non-correspondence to ethical and legal references and sources. The way of knowing them is to refer to sources related to the appropriate system. For example, the way of knowing the ethical and legal precepts of Islam is to refer to the Qur’an and Sunnah.

The second way to describe their real application and the ‘case itself’ of their purport is with regard to the universal principles of ethics and law, including natural law, without paying attention to whether it is valid or not in a specific system of values or accepted by a given society.

Consider for example the following ethical propositions: “Justice is good,” or “One ought not to be cruel to anyone,” and such legal propositions as, “Every human has a right to life,” and “No one must be killed undeservingly.” There are a variety of views about this subject, and especially in Western ethical and legal philosophy, it has become an arena of conflict.

A Review of the Most Famous Opinions

The most famous opinions on this matter are the following:

A. Some of the Western philosophers of ethics and law basically deny the fundamental and proven principles, especially the positivists, who consider discussion of them to be vain and meaningless, as they are metaphysical and unscientific thoughts.

Of course, as much is to be expected from the sympathizers of this school of so-called positivists, whose eyes are glued to the senses. With regard to other thinkers who have occasionally raised this kind of issue, it must be said that the origin of this idea is the change in legal and ethical values in different societies at different times, which has led them to believe in the relativity of ethics and law, and has led them to doubt or deny basic evaluative principles. The roots of such ideas may be found in explanations of the relativity of ethics and law.

B. Another group of philosophers considers evaluative propositions to express social values arising from the needs of people and their inner emotions, which change as they change; hence, they hold that ethical propositions are outside the realm of rational discussion based on certain, eternal and necessary principles. On this basis, the criteria for the truth and falsity of these propositions would be these same

needs and inclinations which are the causes of their validity.

In reply, it must be said that undoubtedly all practical wisdom is related to the voluntary behavior of man, behavior originating from a kind of desire and inner inclination directed toward a specific goal and destination. On this basis, specific non-whatish concepts occur, and propositions are formed from them.

The role of practical wisdom, however, is to lead man as he is confronted with a choice among diverse desires and inclinations to the basic and lofty human goal, and it leads him toward happiness and desired perfection.

Such a way does not often correspond with the desires of most people, who are bound to their animal desires, to worldly fleeting material pleasures. Rather it forces them to adjust their instinctual animal desires and to close their eyes to material worldly pleasures.

Therefore, if by people's needs and inclinations we mean just individual and group needs, which are actually always in conflict and interfere with each other, and cause corruption and the decay of society, then this is something opposed to the basic goals of ethics and law.

If the meaning is the specific needs and lofty human inclinations which are latent in most people and are unactualized and dominated by animal desires and tendencies, this is not incompatible with constancy, eternity, universality and necessity. These kinds of propositions need not be dispelled from the realm of demonstrative knowledge. As the evaluative concepts, which are usually subjects of this kind of proposition, implicitly contain a sort of figure of speech, this does not mean that they are without any intellectual basis, as was shown in Lesson Fifteen.

C. The third view is that the principles of ethics and law stem from self- evident propositions of practical reason, and like the self-evident propositions of theoretical reason, they arise from the nature of the intellect, and are without need of proof or argument. The criterion for their truth and falsity is agreement and opposition to human conscience.

The roots of this view lie in the thoughts of the ancient Greek philosophers, and most Eastern and Western philosophers have accepted it. Among them, Kant has emphasized it. Of all the views, it is the most dignified one and the one closest to the truth. But at the same time, it is open to subtle objections, some of which will be indicated.

1. On the surface, this view asserts the multiplicity of intellects and the separation of their percepts, which may be denied.

2. The difficulty which is related to innateness of percepts of the theoretical intellect also applies to this view.

3. The principles of ethics and law are imagined in this view to be without need of reasoning and justification. Even the most universal of them, the good of justice and the evil of injustice, are in need of

proof, as will be indicated.

Inquiry about a Problem

In order to make the truth clear regarding this question, several brief introductory remarks will be mentioned. Their detailed explanation will be left for the philosophy of ethics and law.

1. Ethical and legal propositions are related to the voluntary behavior of man, behavior which is the means to obtain desired goals. Their value derives from the fact that they are means and instruments to those desired goals.

2. The goals man attempts to achieve are either to secure natural worldly needs, and satisfying animal desires, or for securing social welfare and the prevention of corruption and anarchy, or for the achievement of eternal felicity and spiritual perfection. The natural and animal goals are not the source of values for the primary movement toward them. Of themselves, they have no relation to ethics and law.

However, social interests, whether or not they conflict with individual interests and pleasures, are one of the sources from which value arises. Another source from which value arises is the view toward eternal happiness, for the sake of which one must cover one's eyes from some material and worldly desires.

Above all, as motivation for behavior, is the desire to reach human perfection, which, in the view of Islam, is to be close to God the Most High. Therefore, it can be said that value in all cases arises from putting aside one's desires for the sake of reaching higher desires.

3. Regarding the law, different goals have been presented, the most universal and most inclusive of which is securing social interests, which has various branches.

On the other hand, different ideals have been mentioned for ethics. Above all of them is the extreme perfection of being in the shadow of those close to God the Most High. If this goal is the motivation of man's behavior, either individually or socially, it will have ethical value. Therefore, behavior regarding the law can also be included under the umbrella of ethics, on the condition that the motivation is ethical.

4. The mentioned goals have two aspects. One is their desirability for man such that it causes man to close his eyes to base desires. On this view, these goals are related to the innate desires of man to achieve happiness and perfection. This aspect is psychological.

It is subordinate to scientific and perceptual principles and knowledge. The other aspect is ontological (takwini), which is completely objective and independent of individual inclinations, desires, recognition and knowledge.

If an action is considered in relation to its desired goal, from the point of view of its desirability, the concept of value may be abstracted from it. If it is considered with respect to its ontological relation, with

the consequences which result from it, the concepts of obligation and permissibility are obtained from it. In philosophical language, such obligation is interpreted as relative necessity (dharurat bil–qiyas).

Now, with regard to this introduction, we can come to the conclusion that the criterion of truth and falsity and correctness and error in ethical and legal propositions is their effect in achieving the desired goals. The effect which is not subordinate to one's: inclinations, desires, tastes and opinion.

Like other causal relations, it arises from the reality of the case itself. Of course, in recognizing the ultimate goal, and the intermediate goals, it is possible to make mistakes, so that, for example, someone on the basis of his materialistic outlook will limit man's goal to worldly luxuries. Likewise, it is possible to make mistakes in recognition of the ways in which a man achieves real goals.

But none of these mistakes are harmful to the causal relation between voluntary actions and their results, nor do they cause their exclusion from the realm of intellectual discussions and rational arguments. The errors of philosophers do not imply a denial of intellectual realities independent from opinion and thought. Controversies among scientists about the rules of experimental knowledge do not mean that there is no such knowledge to be gained.

In conclusion, the principles of ethics and law are philosophical propositions that can be proven by intellectual arguments, although the intellect of the common man in its subdivisions and particularities is deficient and is unable to deduce a judgment for every particular proposition from the universal principles because of the complexity of the formulas, the abundance of factors and variables, and due to lack of proficiency. In these cases, there is no alternative but to rely on revelation.

Therefore, it cannot be said that ethical and legal propositions depend on the inclinations, desires, tastes and opinions of individuals or groups, and hence that definitive and universal principles are not acceptable; nor can it be said that ethical and legal propositions depend on the needs and changing conditions of the time and place, and that rational proofs do not apply to them but only to universal, eternal and necessary propositions.

It is also wrong to claim that these propositions pertain to an intellect other than the theoretical intellect, and that therefore reasoning about them with philosophical premises related to the theoretical intellect is incorrect.

Answer to an Objection

An objection may be raised here on the grounds that this view contradicts the opinion of all the logicians, an opinion which is also accepted by the Islamic philosophers. In logic, it is mentioned that a dialectical argument (jadal) is composed of indemonstrable indisputable premises, but on the contrary, a proof (burhan) is composed of certain premises, and an example of an indemonstrable premise is, "Truth is good," which is an ethical proposition.

In response, it must be stated that the greatest logicians of Islam, Ibn Sina and Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, have suggested that these propositions in this universal and absolute form, are considered indemonstrable, and may only be employed in dialectical arguments, not in proofs. They have hidden and special restrictions which are obtained from the relation between and actions and its desired result.

Hence, it is not correct to tell the truth when it leads to someone's murder. Therefore, if this kind of proposition in this absolute and universal form is applied in a syllogism on the basis of its general acceptance, the proposition will be dialectical.

However, it is possible that this same proposition may be transformed into a certain proposition by taking into account rational standards, subtle relations and hidden restrictions. For such propositions proofs may be constructed, and their conclusions may be used in other proofs.

Relativism in Ethics and Law

As was mentioned, most value propositions, especially legal propositions, have exceptions, and even the goodness of truth telling is not universal. One the other hand, sometimes a single subject really may be the locus of two topics to which conflicting judgments apply. In case the criteria utilized for them are equal, one is free to use either.

In case the importance of one of the criteria is preferred over another, one ought to defer to the more important criterion. In practice, the other is then mooted. Likewise, it is seen that some legal judgments have temporal restrictions, and after a while they are abrogated.

Attention to this point has brought about the idea of the absolute relativity of the value propositions, and the idea that they do not apply generally to all individuals at all times. Schools of thought with positivistic inclinations also consider differences in value systems in different societies and times to provide reason for relativism with respect to all value propositions.

But the truth is that this kind of relativism can be found in the laws of the empirical sciences, and the universality of empirical laws is based on the satisfaction of conditions and the nonexistence of obstacles. From a philosophical point of view, these restrictions are due to the complexity of the causes of phenomena. With the lack of one of the conditions, the effect is also annulled.

Therefore, if the causes of ethical and legal judgments are precisely determined, and the conditions and restrictions of their subjects are completely accounted for, we will see that ethical and legal principles, in the limits of these standards and final causes, are general and absolute. In this respect, they are no different from the other scientific laws.

It must be mentioned that in this discussion other focus has been on the universal principles of ethics and law; but some particularities, such as traffic regulations and the like, fall outside the scope of this discussion.

The Difference between Legal and Ethical Propositions

Now that we have come to the end of this discussion, we had better mention the difference between legal and ethical propositions. Of course, there are numerous differences between these two groups of propositions which must be discussed in legal and ethical philosophy. Here we simply point out one of these differences which are more important and basic, the difference in their goals.

As we know, the basic goal of the law is the social happiness of the people in worldly life, which is determined by legal rules with the guarantee of government enforcement. However, the ultimate goal of ethics is eternal happiness and spiritual perfection, and its compass is wider than that of social conditions.

Hence, legal and ethical subjects overlap. A proposition, insofar as it is related to the social happiness of man supported by government is legal, and in so far as it affects the eternal happiness and spiritual perfection of man, it is ethical, such as the existence of repayment of loans and the prohibition against treason.

In such cases, if the observance of the rule is only motivated by fear of governmental punishment, it has no ethical value, even if it is in agreement with legal regulations. If the deed is motivated by a higher goal, which is an ethical goal, it will also be ethical.

It must be mentioned that these differences accord with a view which is accepted in ethics, and there are also other views, for information about which one must refer to books on ethics and the philosophy of law.

Part 3: Ontology

Lesson 21: Introduction to Ontology
Lesson 22: The Concept of Existence
Lesson 23: Entified Reality
Lesson 24: Existence and Whatness
Lesson 25: Precepts of Whatness
Lesson 26: Introduction to the Fundamentality of Existence
Lesson 27: The Fundamentality of Existence
Lesson 28: Unity and Multiplicity
Lesson 29: Unity and Multiplicity in Entified Existence
Lesson 30: The Levels of Existence

Lesson 21: Introduction to Ontology

Introduction to the Lesson

Part I of this work began with an overview of the history of philosophical thought, followed by some remarks on philosophical terminology, and a brief discussion of the relation among philosophy, the sciences, and 'irfan. This part ended with a declaration of the need for and importance of philosophical inquiry.

In Part II, on Epistemology, an account was presented of the roles played by reason and experience in the formation of ideas and their relations to their instances. The aim of this account was to establish the 'value of knowledge', showing that the intellect has the ability to solve the problems of philosophy and metaphysics.

In this, the third part, we are to employ the God-given power of reason, one of the greatest of divine blessings, to survey the problems of metaphysics. Metaphysics is called 'the mother of the sciences', and is said to hold the key to the most important questions man faces in life, questions which play a most fundamental role in human destiny, regarding eternal felicity or damnation.

In this part one will find a discussion of the truth (haqiqah) of existence, the ways in which it is manifested, and the relation all existents have to one another. Prior to these discussions, however, some issues must be explained concerning concepts and the relation between concepts and their instances, and concerning words and the relation between words and their meanings, as well as some related matters.

Warnings about Concepts

It is obvious that the employment of the intellect requires the use of concepts. Concepts are irreplaceable tools of thought which must be used whenever one engages in thinking or reasoning. Even knowledge by presence, when it is to be used in thinking or reasoning, must be used by means of mental concepts which are obtained from it.

When we indicate entified existence in the external world, and the attention of the mind is turned to that which lies beyond it, we use 'entified' and 'objective' concepts, which play the role of mirrors, or symbols and signs for the entified realities (haqayiq).

All uses of concepts in thought and reasoning are not equal. The variation in the uses of concepts stems from the essential differences among the concepts themselves. For example, there exist differences among whatish, philosophical and logical concepts, and each of these types must be further specified in

a particular branch of the sciences, for these differences in the concepts pertain to the different characteristics of their employment and the ways in which the mind attends to them.

For example, the concept ‘universal’ cannot be understood as a mirror or sign for something objective and entified, for objective things are always existents in the form of individuals. It is impossible to apply the property of universality to an objective existent. It is with respect to this point that it is said, “Existence is equivalent to individuality.”

Thus, the inapplicability of the concept of universality as a mirror or sign for something objective is due to the essential characteristics of this concept itself, which, like other logical concepts, can only be used for other mental concepts. Philosophical and whatish concepts, on the other hand, may be used to describe objective things.

In our discussions of epistemology, we divided concepts into two kinds, universal and particular. Each particular concept is a looking glass for a particular individual, and is unable to describe anything but its own individual instance.

To the contrary, universal concepts have the ability to act as mirrors for countless individuals. This bifurcation is related to the mirror–like referential and conceptual capacities of the concepts. Universal concepts themselves, however, have other aspects pertaining to their existential aspects in the mind. In this respect, things such as the existence of particular concepts and such as existences outside the mind are considered as cases of individuality, as was said in Lesson Fourteen.

The group of universal concepts which have objective instances, which in technical terms are said to have ‘objective characterization’ (ittisaf khariji), may also be further subdivided into two groups: whatish concepts, which group together equivalent cases and specify their whatish limits; and philosophical concepts, which refer to fundamental being and existential relations, as well as to deficiency and nothingness, but which do not represent specific whatnesses.

The concepts of the first group naturally refer to common whatnesses among individuals, or, in other words, they refer to equivalent limits among existents. The members of the second group, however, are not applied to things in this way, for their abstraction depends upon a specific intellectual point of view.

In technical terms, the occurrence (‘urudh) of philosophical concepts is mental and their application to numerous different cases shows the unity of the point of view which the intellect takes toward them, however different these cases are with respect to their whatnesses and the limits of their existence, as, for example, in the case of cause, which may be applied both to material and abstract instances despite their whatish differences.

Of course, the abstraction of the concept cause from various different instances is not meaningless, but the unity of the concept does not provide reason in support of the unity of the reality (haqiqah) of its instances. It is enough that all of the instances have a certain aspect in common, that other existents

depend upon them, an aspect which is determined with the effort of the intellect.

For this reason, this kind of intellectual aspect must not be confused with objective aspects and existential limits. It would be better to use the expression ‘existential manners and aspects’ instead of ‘existential limits’ regarding the philosophical concepts.

For example, we should say, “The unity of the concept of causation indicates the participation in a manner of existence, or the participation of several existents in a single aspect, that is, they are all participants in the respect that other existents are their effects, or that other existents depend upon them.”

Likewise, the multiplicity of philosophical concepts, or the number of philosophical and whatish concepts which apply in a given case, does not indicate a multiplicity of the objective aspects of the case, just as it is known to us that there is but a single simple subject of our various states of consciousness and of presentational knowledge. The mind obtains numerous concepts, and it reflects them in the form compound propositions.

Also, the application of a single philosophical concept to an object, such as the concept of causation, does not provide reason to deny the application of its opposite, contrary to the case for whatish concepts. For example, if the concept of white is applied to a body, then the concept of black will not apply in the same state at the same point.

To the contrary, one may attribute to a single thing the concept of being the cause of an existent in the very state in which one attributes to it the concept of being the effect of another existent. In technical terms: contrariety in philosophical concepts requires the unity of both the aspect and what is added to it.

We have learned that one must pay attention to two points regarding the employment of concepts. First, one must take into consideration the specific characteristics of each kind of concept, so as to avoid over generalization from one kind of concept to another, and in this respect one must especially pay attention to the characteristics specific to each of these three kinds of concepts: whatish, philosophical and logical, for many philosophical difficulties are the effect of confusion about them.

The other point is that one must not fall into the trap of the fallacy of confusing concepts with their instances, either by attributing the characteristics of concepts to their instances, or the reverse, attributing the characteristics of the instances to the concepts which apply to them.

Warnings about Language

We know that the fundamental instruments of thought and reasoning are concepts and the intelligibles, however, the communication of our thoughts and understanding is by means of words.

In the same way that concepts play the role of mirrors for the objects of the external world, words also

play this same role in relation to concepts. There exists such a strong relationship between concepts and words that often when one thinks it is words which convey concepts to the mind, and on this basis, words are said to be the 'verbal existence' of things, just as concepts are considered to be their 'mental existence'.

Some have exaggerated this point to such an extent that they would reduce thinking to a kind of mental speaking, and proponents of this sort of view have been found among advocates of 'linguistic analysis' and 'analytic philosophy' who imagine that philosophical concepts have no reality beyond that of words, so that philosophical discussions are to be reduced to topics in some branch of linguistics. The shallowness of this idea was indicated to some extent in our discussions of epistemology.

Analogous confusions to those warned against with respect to concepts are possible regarding language. Sometimes the equivocal use of a word is taken to indicate a single meaning or concept, while sometimes the opposite mistake occurs and participation in a single meaning is viewed as a merely nominal agreement.

Then again, sometimes the key to the solution of a philosophical difficulty is sought in distinctions among various linguistic features, reference and metaphor, or other figures of speech. Concepts are sometimes expressed by a single word or expression because of the closeness of their meanings, and there is confusion here with the phenomenon of equivocation, as was mentioned in the fourth lesson.

In this respect one must be very careful not to mix up verbal questions with questions of real meaning, and also not to confuse the principles of language with those of meanings. In every discussion, the intended meanings must be fully specified so as to avoid mistakes due to equivocation.

The Self-evidence (Badahat) of the Concept of Existence

In Part I, we observed that prior to beginning on the questions of any science, we must first become acquainted with its topics so as to obtain correct ideas about them. Also, in every true science (i.e., science which is not simply conventional) we must become aware of the true existence of its subjects, for otherwise the discussions which pivot on this axis will be without basis or foundation and so will be unable to get anywhere.

In case the existence of the subject is not evident (badihi), it must be proven by means of one of the confirming sources of science, which is usually the function of another science which requires philosophical discussion.

We must now see how the subject of philosophy itself fares with respect to idea and assertion. According to the basic definition of first philosophy or metaphysics, the subject of this science is the 'absolute existent' or 'being qua being'. However, the concept of 'existent' is one of the most self-evident concepts abstracted by the mind from all existents.

A definition of it is neither needed nor is it possible, for just as it was said that no concept can be found which is any clearer than the concept of knowledge (‘ilm), which could be used to explain it, so too, it may be argued in this case.

One of the clear indications of the self-evidence of the concept of existence is this: during our discussion of epistemology we came to know that when an item of presentational knowledge is pictured in the mind, of necessity, it takes the form of a simple proposition (halliyyah basitah), the predicate of which is “existent”, [e.g. “I am an existent”, or “Fear is an existent”].

This is an action performed by the mind with respect to the most easy and most elementary findings which are present to it and witnessed by it. This action would not be possible if a clear concept were not obtained of existent and existence.

Reasons for doubt have been suggested regarding the concept of ‘existent’ or ‘existence’, and have given rise to heated discussions in both Western and Islamic philosophies, which will be indicated briefly below.

The Relation between Existence and Perception

Among the discussions about the concept of existence is that of Berkeley, who claimed that the meaning of ‘existence’ is nothing more than ‘perceiving or being perceived’, while other philosophers have given it different meanings, about which they have engaged in fruitless discussions whose source is the misuse of this expression [‘existence’]. Berkeley, however, insists on his claim, and considers it one of the fundamental principles of his philosophy.

The truth is that Berkeley is deserving of this charge, for this expression and its synonyms in all languages (like hasti in Farsi) have no ambiguity, and are never understood as meaning ‘perceiving or being perceived’. If it so happens that in some language a synonym for ‘existence’ and a synonym for ‘perception’ have the same root, this should not interfere with its known meaning.[1]

Among the indications of the invalidity of this claim is that existence does not have more than one meaning, while perceiving and being perceived are two different meanings. Also, the meaning of existence is a single concept in itself in which there is no relation to a subject or object.

For the same reason, it is applied to the existence of Almighty God with respect to which there is no room for imagining a subject and object, whereas, to the contrary, the meaning of perception includes a relation to subject and object.

Actually, this proposal of Berkeley’s is an example of mistaking a concept for its instances. Here it is a double mistake, for he confuses the level of subsistence (thubut) with the level of proof for subsistence (ithbat) and he relates the implications of being able to prove the subsistence of an entity, perceiving or being perceived, to the subsistence of the entity as it is in itself.

Therefore, the concept of existence and the concept of perception are two distinct concepts, and the concept of neither of them is to be obtained through the analysis of the other. And the only thing which can be said is that after proving the existence of God and His omniscience, it can be said that every existent is either a perceiver or is perceived, for if an existent is not a perceiver, at least it may be said that it is subsumed under divine knowledge.

However, this [extensional] equivalence of instances, which requires proof, has no relation to the [intensional] equivalence between the concept of existence and the concept of perception.

1. The root of the Arabic word for existence, wujud means to be found. [Tr.]

Lesson 22: The Concept of Existence

The Unity of the Concept of Existence

Another discussion which has been raised about the concept of existence is whether existence applies to all existents with a single meaning, with an unequivocal meaning, or with different meanings, with a kind of equivocation.

The origin of this discussion is that a group of theologians imagined that the sense in which existence is used for creatures could not be used for God the Almighty. For this reason, some said that when existence is related to a thing, it takes the meaning of that to which it is related.

For example, in the case of man it will have the meaning of man, and in the case of tree, the meaning of tree. Some others, in this respect, posited two meanings, one specifically for God the Almighty, and the other for all other created things.

This sort of doubt may be traced to confusion between concepts and their instances, that is, that which cannot be compared pertaining to God the Almighty and to creatures is the instance of existence, not its concept. Differences among instances do not require differences in concept.

We also can understand the source of this confusion as being due to confusion between whatish concepts and philosophical concepts. Commonality of concept indicates a common essence among instances only when the concept is a kind of whatish concept.

However, the concept of existence is a kind of philosophical concept, and its unity only indicates an aspectival unity, which the intellect considers in order to abstract [the concept of existence], and that aspect is that of the lack of nothingness.

In their refutation of the first position, Islamic philosophers have made several claims, including the following: “If existence had the same meaning as every subject to which it is applied, this would require that in simple propositions the predication, which is a kind of common predication, should be turned into a primary predication and be self-evident. Also, knowledge of their subject and predicate would be equivalent, so that if one did not understand the meaning of the subject, he would not understand the meaning of the predicate either.”

For the refutation of the second position there is an explanation which amounts to this: If the meaning of existence with respect to God the Almighty were anything other than its meaning with respect to contingent things, this would necessitate that the contradictory meaning of each would correspond to the other, because there is nothing of which one of two contradictories is not true. For example, each thing is either man or non-man.

The contradictory of the meaning of existence among contingent things is nothingness. So, if existence in this sense, opposed to nothingness, is not related to God, nothingness is related to the Creator, and the existence which is related to Him would really be an instance of nothingness.

In any case, one whose mind is not confused with such doubts will have no qualms about the fact that the words ‘existence’ and ‘being’ are used with one meaning in all cases, and the necessity of the unity of the concept of existence is not that all existents have a common essence.

The Substantival Concept and the Copulative Concept of Existence

The third discussion regarding the concept of existence is about equivocation regarding existence between the substantival independent sense and the copulative relative meaning.

It is explained that in logical propositions, in addition to two substantival and independent concepts (subject and predicate), there is another concept regarding the relation between them, and in Farsi this is indicated by the word ast (in English, is).

But in Arabic there is no equivalent, and a kind of sentence structure is used for this purpose (equational sentences). This concept is a kind of verbal concept, such as the concepts indicated by prepositions, which cannot be independently imagined, but must be understood in the context of a sentence.

Logicians call this verbal meaning ‘relational existence’ (wujud rabti or wujud rabit). This meaning of ‘existence’ is contrasted with its substantival meaning, which can be a real predicate, and which for this reason is called ‘predicative existence’ (wujud mahmuli).

Sadr al-Muta’allihin (Mulla Sadra) mentions in the Asfar that the use of the word ‘existence’ with its copulative meaning is a special term with a meaning other than that with which it is commonly used,

while its ordinary meaning is substantival and independent, and therefore using the word ‘existence’ with these two meanings must be considered a kind of equivocation.

Some have not taken note of this point, and have considered the concept of existence to be absolutely univocal. They have even gone so far as to try to establish entified relational existence by these concepts, explaining that, for example, when we say, “Ali is a scientist,” the expression “Ali” refers to a specific person, and for the word “scientist” there exists its science, which exists in the external world.

Therefore, the concept of the relation of the proposition which is indicated by the word “is” refers to a objective relation between science and Ali. Hence, in the context of the external world there also is established a kind of relational existence.

There is confusion here between the concepts and principles of logic with the concepts and principles of philosophy, and the principles of propositions which are about mental concepts contaminate the objective instances.

On this basis, they deny the existence of the relation in the ‘simple question’ (halliyyah basitah, i.e., of the form ‘x exists’), for one cannot imagine a relation between a thing itself and its existence. But the existence of a relation in a proposition which refers to a simple thing does not require the objective existence of the relation in its instance; rather, basically, one can never consider the relation to be a entified objective thing.

What can finally be said about it is that the relation in a ‘simple question’ is a sign of the unity of the instance of the subject and the predicate, and in ‘compound questions’ it is the sign of their entified unity.

It is strange that some of the Western philosophers have denied the substantival meaning of existence (predicative existence), and they have limited the concept of existence to the copulative meaning, considering it to be a relation between the subject and the predicate. For this reason, they consider 'simple questions' to be pseudo-propositions, not real propositions, for they suppose that in reality such propositions doe not have predicates.

The truth is that this kind of position results from weakness of mental powers of philosophical analysis, otherwise the substantival and independent concept of existence is not something to be denied, rather the copulative meaning is that which can only be established with difficulty, especially for someone in whose language there is no particular equivalent for it [the copulative meaning of existence, which has no equivalent in Arabic].

It is possible that the reason for the denial of the substantival meaning of existence is that in the language of the deniers, there is but one word which is the equivalent of the copulative and substantival meanings of existence, unlike Farsi, in which the word “hasti” (being) is used for the substantival meaning, and the word “ast” (is) is used for the copulative meaning. That is why this ambiguity has arisen such that the meaning of existence is absolutely limited to the copulative meaning.

Again we emphasize that philosophical discussions must not rely upon linguistic ones, and the principles of grammar and linguistics must not be taken as the basis for the solution of philosophical problems. We should always be careful not to allow ourselves to be misled by the features of words from the way to the precise knowledge of concepts, nor to make mistakes about knowledge of the principles of entified existents.

Existence and Existents

Another point worth mentioning about the expressions for existence and its concept is that since the word wujud (existence) is the source from which mawjud (existent) is derived, it is an infinitive [Arabic words are typically derived from infinitives] and includes the meaning occurrence, and it is related to a subject or object, and the equivalent to it in Farsi is the word budan (to be).

Likewise, from the grammatical point of view, the expression mawjud (existent) is a passive participle and includes the meaning of the action of the verb upon the essence. Sometimes from the word mawjud (existent) an artificial infinitive is obtained in the form of mawjudiyat (being an existent), and is used as an equivalent to wujud (existence).

A word in the Arabic language which is used in an infinitive form is sometimes divested of its meaning relative to a subject or object and is used in the form of a verbal noun (ism masdar) which indicates the action of the verb itself. Therefore, with regard to wujud (existence) one may also consider this sort of meaning.

On the other hand, the meaning pertaining to the action of the verb which indicates motion, or at least indicates a state or quality, cannot be directly predicated of things. For example, one cannot predicate raftan (to go), which is an infinitive, or raftar (going), which is a verbal noun, to a thing or person, rather, either a derivation must be obtained from it, for example, the word ravandeh (goer) may be a predicate for it, or another word which includes a derived meaning should be added to it, for example, sahib-e raftar (one who is going).

The first type is technically called hu hu (it it) predication, and the second type is called dhu hu (possessor of it) predication. For instance, the predication of 'animal' to 'man' is hu hu predication, while the predication of 'life' to it is called dhu hu predication.

This discussion, as has been observed, is basically related to grammars, whose rules are conventional and differ from one language to another. Some languages are richer than others with regard to vocabulary and rules of grammar while others are more limited.

However, since it is possible that the relations between words and meanings may lead to mistakes in philosophical discussions, it is necessary to mention that in the usage of the expressions wujud (existence) and mawjud (existent) in philosophical discussions, we must not merely attend to linguistic

features, but rather, basically attention to them distracts the mind from discerning the intended meanings.

In philosophy, when the word wujud (existence) is used, the intended meaning is not that of an infinitive or the action of neither a verb, nor, when the word mawjud (existent) is used is the intended meaning the respectival one of the passive participle.

For example, when it is said of God, the Exalted, that He is “sheer existence”, is this to be interpreted in terms of the action of a verb or the relation to a subject and object, or as meaning a quality or state and its relation to the essence? Are we to quibble over how the word wujud (existence) is to be applied to God, the Exalted, when the predication of an infinitive to an essence is not correct?

When the word mawjud (existent) is applied to all realities and these include the Necessary Existent as well as contingent existents, is this to be understood in terms of the meaning of a passive participle? Is it to be argued on this basis that since a passive participle requires a subject that God also requires a subject? Or to the contrary, is it incorrect to apply it to the Necessary Existent because of that meaning, so that it may not be said that God is an existent?!

It is obvious that this sort of linguistic discussion has no place in philosophy, and not only is one unable to solve even one of the problems of philosophy by engaging in such discussion, it increases the problems and yields nothing but distortions in thought.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and fallacies, one must pay exact attention to the technical meanings of expressions, and in cases where these do not correspond to the ordinary literal meanings or a technical meaning in other sciences; this difference must be given full consideration so that one does not become the victim of confusion and error.

It follows that the philosophical concept of wujud (existence) is equivalent to absolute reality, and on this point is the opposite of nothingness, and in technical terms is its contradictory. It includes all things from the sacred divine essence to abstract and material realities, from substances to accidents and from essences to states.

When these very same entified realities are reflected in the mind in the form of propositions, at least two substantival concepts of them are obtained, one of which is associated with the subject, and is usually a whatish concept, while the other is the concept of ‘mawjud’ (existent), which is a philosophical concept, and is associated with the predicate, since its being respectival requires its being a predicate.

Lesson 23: Entified Reality

The Self-evidence (Badahat) of Entified Reality

The subject of philosophy is considered to be the 'existent', as was explained in the two previous lessons. Now, we shall present the explanation of the self- evidence of the belief in the entified reality of being.

The truth is this that existence is like 'ilm (knowledge) both with regard to its concept and with regard to its objective reality and just as that concept requires no definition, its entified reality also is self-evident and without need of proof. No intelligent person imagines that the world of being is nothing but nothing, and that no person exists or any other existent. Even the Sophists who considered man to be the measure of all things, at least accepted the existence of man!

There is only one sentence from Gorgias who is considered to be the most extreme of the Sophists, which apparently is an absolute denial of all existence, as was mentioned in the discussion of epistemology. However, it does not seem that his intention—assuming that it has been correctly narrated—is that of the apparent meaning of his words, such that it would include his own existence and that of his speech, unless he was severely afflicted with mental illness, or uttered the words out of spite.

In Lesson Twelve about doubts leading to the denial of knowledge, we said that these doubts themselves presupposed knowledge, to which we may add here that this same doubt requires the acceptance of some existents which correspond to the mentioned knowledge. However, if someone would deny his own existence and the existence of his denial, he would be like the one whom, in the previous problem, denies the existence of his own doubt, and he must be treated practically to make him accept reality.

In any case, an intelligent person whose mind has not been polluted with the doubts of the Sophists and skeptics, not only accepts his own existence, the existence of his perceptive powers, mental images and concepts, and his own psychic activities, but also is certain of the existence of other people, and the external world, and for this reason when he becomes hungry, he eats food of the external world, and when he becomes hot or cold, he decides to make use of things in the external world.

When he faces an enemy, or feels himself to be in some other danger, he thinks about defense and seeks some solution for it, and if he is able he will rise up and fight, and if not he may prefer to escape. When he has feelings of friendship, he decides to become intimate with a friend in the external world, and establishes friendly relations with him, and similarly with other facets of life. And do not imagine that the Sophists and idealists behaved any differently, for otherwise they would not have lived very long; they would either die of hunger or thirst, or some calamity or disaster would afflict them.

For this reason it is said that belief in entified existence is self evident and natural. But this discussion must be expanded and elaborated in more detail, and we will do this to the extent required. But before presenting this subject, it is worth giving an account of the ways in which reality is denied, so that we can take an appropriate position regarding each of them.

Ways to Deny Reality

The denial of entified reality appears in various forms, which can be divided into five categories:

1. The absolute denial of being such that for the concept of existence which is the subject of philosophy, there remains no instance, as required by the apparent words of Gorgias which were narrated.

It is clear that with such an assumption there not only remains no place for philosophical or scientific discussions, but also the door to speech and hearing must be absolutely closed. And for such claims, a logical response is inapplicable, and they must be treated practically.

2. The denial of the being of anything but “I, the perceiver”, such that only one instance of “existent” remains. This position is not as silly as the previous one, but on the basis of it, its proponent has no right to speak or debate, for he does not accept the existence of another person with whom to converse or debate.

If such a person is in a position to be debated, he must first be charged with having violated his own claim, and this violation requires the rejection of his assumption.

3. The denial of being beyond that of humanity, as has been reported of some Sophists. On the basis of this position, instances of “existent” will be limited to humans. This claim, which is relatively more moderate than those mentioned above, opens the door to discussion and debate.

There is room for asking the proponent for reasons in favor of his own existence and that of other people which will oblige him to accept some self-evident propositions. Then, on the basis of the self-evident propositions, some other theoretical points may also be proven.

4. The denial of the being of material existents, as is understood from the words of Berkeley, for he considered being an existent equivalent with being a perceiver or something perceived, and perceivers include God and non-material existents. So, it is decided that perceived things are to be limited to perceptible forms (essentially known (ma‘lumat bil-dhat) which are realized within the perceiver himself, not outside him.

In this way there is no room for the objective existence of material things.Other idealists, like Hegel, may be joined to those mentioned above, for they imagine the world to have the form of thoughts for absolute spirit, which are considered to be subject to the laws of logic (but not of cause and effect).

5. There is room to include along with the idealists, who deny a part of reality, that is, material reality, the materialists, who are also deniers of reality, and they truly deny the greater part of reality.

Moreover, the idealists are more logical than the materialists, for their position rests on knowledge by presence and internal experience which have absolute value, however much their inferences may be erroneous. However, the position of the materialists rests on that which is given by the senses, which is the source of most perceptual errors.

By attending to the various types of denial of reality, we reach the conclusion that only the first hypothesis implies an absolute denial of reality, and each of the other hypotheses implies merely a denial of a part of reality and a limitation of its circle.

On the other hand, for each of the five kinds of hypothesis, there is another hypothesis which appears in the form of doubt in absolute reality or with respect to specific realities. If these doubts are mingled with a denial of the possibility of knowledge, that is, if in addition to presenting his own doubt he claims that logically no one can have knowledge, this sort of claim is related to epistemology, and the answer to it is given in its own place.

However, if the presentation of doubt is not mingled with a denial of the possibility of knowledge, the answer to it may be found in ontology. Basically, the clarification of philosophical questions is to remove doubts and to provide defense against them.

The Secret of the Self-Evidence of Entified Reality

As we indicated at the beginning of this lesson, the absolute denial of reality, the view that the world is nothing, is not something which would be claimed by any conscious intelligent person without some ulterior motive, just as it is regarding the absolute denial of knowledge and apparent doubt about everything, even about the existence of the doubt and doubter. Assuming that someone expresses these sorts of claims, one cannot reason with him logically; rather he must be given a practical response.

On the other hand, the existence of every particular reality is not self-evident, and proof for many of them requires reasons and arguments, and, as has been indicated, one of the most important duties of philosophy is proof of the specific kinds of realities.

Now the following question will be raised: What is the mystery of the self- evidence of the basis of reality?

Perhaps an answer will be given for the affirmation of the existence of entified reality by way of summary, and the affirmation of material reality will be definitive and specific, corresponding to the nature of the intellect, and evidence for this is the existence of such beliefs in all men, as is confirmed by their practical behavior. In this way, four of the methods of denying reality, with the exception of the fifth way, are shown to be invalid.

But this discussion is not sufficiently logical, for, as was mention in lessons seventeen and nineteen, for in this way the correctness of this subject cannot be guaranteed, and there is room to ask whether our intellects would not understand in some other way if they had been created differently. Moreover, to seek confirmation on the basis of the views and behavior of men, in reality is a defective method of inductive inference, which is of no logical value at all.

Perhaps it will be said that these affirmations are primary self-evident truths (badihiyyat awwaliyyah), for which the mere imagining of their subjects and predicates suffices to produce assent.

But this claim is also incorrect, for if we assume that a proposition is in the form of a 'primary predication', it is clear that its purport will not be anything but the conceptual unity of subject and predicate. If we suppose that it is in the form of a 'common predication' and we consider its subject to refer to external instances, and we consider it to be what in logical terminology is called essential necessity (dharuriyyat dhatiyyah), then the truth of such a proposition will be conditional on the existence of the subject in the external world, while this means that its objective existence would be proved by this proposition.

In other words, propositions about reality are like conditional propositions in that their purport is that whenever an instance of the subject obtains in the external world, the predicate for it will be proven. For example, the famous self-evident proposition, "Every whole is greater than its own part," is not able to prove the existence of whole and part in the external world. Rather, its meaning is that whenever a whole obtains in the external world, it will be greater than its own part.

The invalidity of this claim in relation to external reality is clear, for it is not forbidden to imagine the non-existence of the material world. If God had not had the appropriate will, such a world would not have come into existence. Likewise, after its creation, whenever He willed, it would be destroyed.

The truth is this: the self-evidence of reality first takes shape regarding things in consciousness and which are understood by infallible knowledge by presence, and then with the abstraction of the concepts of 'existent' and 'reality' from their subjects they take the form of a proposition called qadhiyyah muhmalah[1] which refers to the principle of reality as such [without quantification], and in this way the principle of entified reality summarily (ijmalan) takes the form of a self-evident proposition.

The Source of Belief in Material Reality

The conclusion of our last discussion was that the source of belief in the basis of entified reality is just knowledge by presence of the realities of conscience, and hence knowledge of other realities, including 'material' realities, cannot be considered self-evident (badihi).

For, as was said in Lesson Eighteen that which is really self-evident and can be known independently of any sort of argument are objects of consciousness and primary self-evident propositions, while the

existence of material realities belongs to neither of these two groups. Therefore, the following question may be posed: What is the source of the dogmatic belief in material realities? And how is it that every person automatically accepts their existence, and that the behavior of each person is firmly based on this?

The answer to this question is that the source of a person's belief in material reality is an 'spontaneous' (irtikazi) but half conscious argument, and it is really a proposition which is close to being self-evident, which is sometimes called 'innate' (fitri).

This may be explained by the fact that in most cases, on the basis of the awareness which it has acquired, the intellect of a person reaches a conclusion very quickly and almost automatically without the process of inference being reflected clearly in the mind. Especially in the period of childhood when the self- awareness of a person is not yet developed, this mental process is rather obscure and close to being unconscious.

Therefore, it is considered that this knowledge obtains its conclusion without a process of thought from its premises, in other words, it is innate and automatic. But as the self-awareness of man develops, and one becomes aware of the activities within one's own mind, the obscurity decreases, and gradually it assumes the form of conscious logical reasoning.

The propositions which logicians have called 'innate' (fitriyyat) and which have been defined as propositions which accompany deductions, or whose middle terms are always present in the mind, are really of this very sort of 'spontaneous' (irtikazi) proposition, reasoning about which takes place very quickly and half-consciously.

Knowledge of material reality really is obtained by this very 'spontaneous' inference, which, especially during the period of childhood, is far from the level of awareness. When we want to explain it in the form of exact logical reasoning, it takes the following form:

Perceptual phenomena (for example the burning of the hand when it comes into contact with fire) is the effect of a cause, and its cause is either it itself (= I, the perceiver), or something other than it. But I myself have not brought it into existence, for I never wanted to burn my hand; therefore its cause will be something other than my existence.

Of course, in order to strengthen our belief in material things with material properties, and to refute the probability of the direct effect of something non- material there is a need to supplement this with other arguments based on knowing the characteristics of material and non-material existents.

But God the Almighty has put such power in the mind of man so that before acquiring mastery of exact philosophical reasoning, he is able to obtain conclusions which are 'spontaneous' and are half-conscious. In this way he is able to secure the needs of his life.

1. This is a kind of proposition whose quantity is indeterminate, e.g., “Metals expand when heated,” in which it is unclear whether the proposition is intended to apply to all metals or only some. According to traditional logic, this is a proposition whose quantity is unspecified, but it is treated like a particular rather than a universal proposition. [Tr.]

Lesson 24: Existence and Whatness

The Relation between the Topics of Existence and Whatness

According to the previous lessons, as was indicated on numerous occasions, when entified reality is pictured in the mind (the locus of acquired knowledge), it is pictured in the form of a simple question (halliyyah basitah), which is composed of at least two independent substantive concepts, one of which usually serves as the subject and is a whatish concept, which can be considered in the conceptual framework of limits to an existent, and one of which is the predicate, the concept of ‘existent’, considered to be a secondary philosophical intelligible which denotes the occurrence of the instance of that essence. In this way two different concepts are obtained for one simple truth, each of which has its own rules and characteristics.

With regard to the concept of existence, or existent, philosophers have contented themselves with mentioning that they are self-evident intellectual concepts, without saying how the mind obtains this concept. Only recently has the late ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, may Allah be pleased with him, attempted to explain how it is abstracted.

Regarding the appearance of whatish concepts, there are various opinions, which were mentioned in the section on epistemology. The opinion which we accepted was that there is a special mental power called the intellect which acquires these concepts automatically from specific percepts. The characteristic of this intellectual picturing is this very universality and ability to correspond to countless instances.

Many philosophers, especially the Peripatetics, have explained the acquiring of whatish concepts in a way which has been the source of many disputes and arguments in the course of the history of philosophy, and in most philosophical discussions, it has been especially influential.

The result of their explanations is this: when we compare several persons, for example, we see that these people, despite their differences in height, weight, skin color and other specific characteristics, all have a common truth which is the source of the common effects in them. The specific attributes of each person are really the particular specification of that person which distinguishes him from others. So, the mind, by deleting the individual specifications acquires the universal perceptual concept of man, which is called the essence of human beings.

Therefore, the perception of several individuals of each essence is required for the direct acquisition of

that essence, so that the mind, attending to individual accidental specifications and the deletion of them is able to abstract the common whatish aspect from the specific accidents and extract the universal essence. It is thus except when a whatness is known by the analysis and composition of other whatnesses without need of prior knowledge of their own individuals.

Therefore, the essence of everything in the external world is often mixed with characteristics which cause their specific qualities. Only the intellect can abstract the essence from the collection of specific accidents, and obtain the pure, sheer, abstracted essence from the specifics.

Then, that which is found after the abstraction is that very thing which exists in the external world concurrent with the individual specifications and specific accidents, and with the plurality of accidents it becomes numerous and a multiplicity. But when the mind abstracts it, it is no longer capable of being multiple. For this reason it is said that a sheer essence is unrepeatable.

Since a whatness, with that very quality of whatish unity, can correspond to a countless number of individuals, it is called a natural universal (kulli tabiʿi), although the characteristic of being universal only applies to what is in the mind, for otherwise, as was already stated, in the external world they are realized always as mixtures with specifying accidents and in the form of individuals and particulars.

Following this, other topics are presented such as, whether natural universals themselves also exist in the external world, or are what obtains in the external world only the individuals, so that the natural universal occurs only in the mind.

There have been many discussions and disputes about this, and researchers have finally come to the opinion that in the external world the natural universals in and of themselves are not existent, but their existence is by the existence of their individuals, and the individuals play the role of intermediaries for the occurrence of natural universals.

Here another precise question can be raised, whether the mediation of the individuals in the occurrence of natural universals is fixed or accidental. In other words, does the mediation of the individuals cause the true occurrence of the natural universal with another existence other than that of the individuals? Does this cause the natural universal to have the property of being existent as its own true attribute? Or does the mediation of the individuals cause an accidental pseudo–attribution of being existent to be related to natural universals?

Another issue is the problem raised in Islamic philosophy of whether a universal may be individuated by means of specific accidents. Every accident in reality also has a whatness to which the mind attributes universality, and therefore it participates with whatnesses of that which has accidents in the need to be individuated.

And this question can be repeated with regard to them, as to how they are to be individuated. How is the addition of a universal essence to cause the individuation of a universal essence of that which has

accidents?

Finally, Farabi offered the solution that the individuation is an essential requirement of entified existence. Every essence in reality is found to be individuated by existence. Specific accidents each of which is individuated by its own existence are considered mere signs of the individuation of the essence of that which has accidents, and cannot be truly considered the cause of the individuation.

It seems that this position of Farabi is the first sprouting of the [doctrine of the] fundamentality of existence, which gradually grew until in the time of Mulla Sadra it took the form of an independent and fundamental topic in transcendent theosophy (hikmat muta'aliyyah).

With this brief explanation, along with several other indicated topics, it has become clear that the topic of the fundamentality of existence is not a topic with which to begin cold in the program of one's research.

One may guess why programs in which it is the first topic of philosophy cause the bewilderment and confusion of students, so that after spending much time on discussions concerning this, they still do not understand it correctly. So what was the motivation for this discussion? What philosophical difficulty can it solve?

In order to find an appropriate place for the problem of the fundamentality of existence by which it can be elucidated in a clear manner, we must indicate prior to this some other problems which will prepare the ground for the presentation and clarification of this subject.

We will choose correct and specific subjects, then we will present explanations of the terms and concepts needed for these discussions, and finally we will take up the discussion of the principle question. In this manner not only will the problem be solved in a clear fashion, but it will also assist in the solution of other important philosophical problems.

How the Mind Becomes Acquainted with the Concept of Existence

As has already been indicated, we have no explanation from the ancient philosophers as to how the concept of existence is abstracted by the mind, and among Islamic philosophers this subject was presented for the first time by our late professor ('Allamah Tabataba'i), may Allah be pleased with him. He has discussions of this in both Usul-e Falsafah and Nahayah al-Hikmah, which can be summarized as follows.

Man primarily finds 'by presence' the existence of a relation in propositions which is really an action of the soul, and the mind, from this, obtains a nominal concept (mafhum-e harfi), which in Farsi is expressed by the word 'ast' (is). After that, it is viewed in an independent form, and the substantival concept of existence is abstracted 'in the possessive case'. Afterward, that qualification is deleted, and it

is understood in an absolute form.

For example, in the sentence, “Ali is wise”, at first the meaning of ‘is’ is obtained by a judgment of the soul to affix wisdom to Ali, so that the meaning of ‘is’ is copulative, and no idea of it is possible except through the sentence. Then it is considered in an independent form, just as the preposition ‘from’ is considered independently and interpreted as meaning ‘origin’. It is said, the word ‘from’ refers to ‘origin’.

In this way, the meaning of ‘the attribution of wisdom to Ali’ which is a possessive concept, is obtained, which includes a relational meaning. Then the possessive and relational aspect is deleted and the independent and absolute meaning of ‘existence’ is obtained.

But perhaps an easier explanation can be presented for how the mind becomes acquainted with the concept of existence and other philosophical concepts. An example of this will be mentioned here, and allusion will be made to it in some other cases as well.

When the soul observes within itself a non-material quality, such as fear, and after it is removed it compares two of its states: the state of fear and the state of a lack of fear. The mind then becomes disposed to abstract from the first state, the concept of the ‘existence of fear’ and from the second state, the concept of the ‘absence of fear’. After the possessive and relational qualification is deleted by abstraction, the absolute concepts of ‘existence’ and ‘nothingness’ are obtained.

This method is also used to abstract other philosophical concepts, and by comparing two existents from a special point of view, two opposite concepts are abstracted. From this the secret of the pairing of these concepts is revealed, such as the concepts of cause and effect, objective and subjective (khariji va dhini), potential and actual, fixed and changing.

In Lesson Fifteen we explained that one of the differences between whatish concepts and philosophical concepts is that the first group is reflected in the mind automatically, while the second group requires mental activity and comparison and analysis, and here we also saw how the mind finds the disposition to abstract the two opposite concepts of existence and nothingness by comparing two states of the soul.

How the Mind Becomes Acquainted with Whatness

Aside from the position of the Platonists, according to whom the perception of whatnesses is by observing abstract truths or by remembering previous observations of them, and some other positions, most philosophers agree that the perception of whatnesses occurs by abstraction from specific objects of perception and from individuating accidents.

On this basis they consider necessary the priority of the perception of several specific and particular things. However, first, this question can be raised, how this abstraction is accomplished for kinds for which there is only one individual? Second, regarding the accidents themselves, which they admit have whatnesses, what is to be said? For it cannot be said that for every accident that it itself has

individuating accidents, so that by abstracting and peeling them off (taqshir) universal whatnesses are obtained.

Hence, some of the scholars have said that this philosophical exposition is metaphorical and is only used as an approach to the subject for new students to philosophy.

The truth is that a whatish concept is a passive perception which is obtained by the intellect, and an individual perception is sufficient for obtaining it, with no other condition. In like manner, an imaginary perception, which is an individual passive perception, is obtained by the faculty of the imagination (khayal) after a single sensory perception.

For example, when our eyes see something of a white color, an imaginary form of it is reflected in the faculty of the imagination, and its universal concept in the intellect is interpreted as the essence 'whiteness', and likewise for other sensory and specific perceptions.

That which causes it to be imagined that the perception of a universal essence is obtained through abstraction and peeling off the accidents is the fact that in this way an answer is sought to the question regarding compound things—such as man, whose elements and attributes are known by different senses and even with the help of scientific instruments, analysis and mental deduction, from which various intellectual concepts are naturally abstracted—as to how a single whatness can be related to them so that all their essences (dhatiyyat) will be included?

In such cases, it is thought that first one must know the accidental aspects of them, aspects whose change, alteration or removal does not cause the destruction of the principle of that existent. For example, if the skin color of a man changes from white to black, his humanity is not removed, and likewise for changes in the height, breadth and other physical attributes and the psychological states of a man.

Hence, all of these aspects and attributes, in relation to man, are accidental, and in order to know his essence all of them should be removed. One of the best ways for knowing which attributes are not essential is seeing whether they differ in different individuals. So, we must look at several individuals who have various attributes and accidents, and by means of the differences among them we find that none of these is essential for man, until we arrive at concepts such that if they are negated the humanity of (the individual) will not remain.

They are the same essential concepts which are common among all the individuals and which are the components of their whatness. In this way, compound whatnesses are considered to have genera and differentia, each of which indicates a specific essential aspect in the compound whatness, as is mentioned in classical logic.

But this subject is based on positive principles which must be discussed in philosophy. From among them is the question of whether each compound existent has a single existence and a single existential

limit which is reflected in the mind as a single whatness. What is the standard of their true unity? How is a multiplicity of elements compatible with that unity? What is the relation between the parts with each other, and what is the relation of all of them with the whole?

Are all of the parts actively existent with respect to the whole, or is the existence of all or some of them potential with respect to the whole? Is that which is called the parts or elements of a compound existent the preparatory condition for the appearance of other simple existences, which constitute the truth of that existent, and which by negligence are all called single existences?

Suppose that there is a way to solve these and other problems completely coherent with a logical theory of genus and difference. It will still only be true of compound whatnesses. The perception of simple whatnesses can never be justified in this way. Finally, each compound essence is composed of several simple whatnesses, and the question of knowledge of the simples will remain.

Lesson 25: Precepts of Whatness

Respects of Whatness

In the previous lesson we narrated from the sages that the essence of every existent in the external world is a mixed with specific accidents and pure essence obtains only in the mind. With regard to this point, we may consider two respectival conceptions of essence: one is the restricted or mixed essence which occurs in the external world, and the other is the abstract essence which may only be imagined in the mind.

The first respectival is called i'tibar bishart-e shay' (the respectival conditional on a thing) and the second is called i'tibar bishart-e la (the negatively conditioned respectival). That which is divided (maqsam) into these two is also considered a respectival of essence, and it is called i'tibar la bi shart (the unconditioned respectival), and it has neither the aspect of being in the external world, being mixed with accidents (restricted by existence), nor the aspect of being in the mind with a lack of accidents (not being in the external world), and it is called a 'natural universal' (kulli tabi'i).

It is believed that since natural universals have no restrictions or conditions, neither the condition of being mixed nor the condition of being abstract, they are assembled from both respectivals. That is, it is both in the external world with restricted essence, and also in the mind with abstract essence.

For this reason it is said, "The essence, in the respect in which it is nothing but itself, is not an existent and not a non-existent, not a universal and not a particular," that is, when we regard the essence itself, and do not consider any other aspect, we will have only a concept which includes neither the meaning of

existence nor the meaning of nonexistence, neither the meaning of universality nor the meaning of particularity.

For this reason it can be the subject of the attribute of existence and it can be subject to the attribute of non-existence, it can be the subject of the attribute of being universal, and it can be the subject of the attribute of being particular, but these attributes will be external to its essence. In other words, all of these attributes are predicated in the form of common predications upon the unconditioned essence, the natural universal, and none of these attributes are predicated in the form of primary predication, for they do not have a conceptual unity with it.

It is necessary to mention that the expressions la bi shart (unconditioned) and bi shart la (negatively conditioned) are used by philosophers in a different context to distinguish the concept of genus and difference from the concept of matter and form. It is explained that when an existent in the external world is composed of matter and form, a concept is obtained from each of them, and it is possible that the essence of a thing is composed of genus and difference.

With this difference in mind, if we consider those concepts as genus and difference then one may be predicated of the other. For example, in the case of the genus and difference of man, it can be said that man is a 'rational animal'. But if the concepts refer to matter and form, then one cannot be predicated of the other. For instance, one cannot predicate the spirit of the body. In this regard it is said that what distinguishes the concept of genus and species from that of matter and form is that genus and difference are unconditioned (la bi shart) while matter and form are negatively conditioned (bi shart-e la).

This terminology is not related to the previous one, and is simply a case of homonymity.It is necessary bear in mind that the diversity and difference of the 'respectivals of essence' (i'tibarat mahiyyah) are merely mental, and it is clear from the title that they are respectival, and have no entified or objective source, and in lieu of them there are no entified existents, and even if the fundamentality of essence is established, there will not be in existence this multiplicity of whatnesses.

Natural Universals

From the review of the different kinds of respectivals of essence, the definition of 'natural universal' may also be obtained, for this is the same as the divisible (maqsami) respectival, the 'unconditioned' essence, in which there is no kind of restriction, not even that of being abstract and lacking accidents, nor that of objective existence. It is called 'universal' because it is common among individuals, and it is called 'natural' to distinguish it from 'logical universals' and 'intellectual universals'.

By the former is meant a universal which may have other accidental concepts in the mind, and by the latter, the `intellectual universal' is meant the universal to which accidents are applied, and which is abstract, 'negatively conditioned', which is only realized in the realm of the intellect and which is the mental instance of the concept of a logical universal.

We previously pointed out that one of the most frequently discussed topics in the history of philosophy has been that concerning the existence of natural universals, whether it can be said that they also have existence in the external world, or if it must be said that their existence is only in the mind, only for intellectual universals, that is, whatnesses abstract of accidents, so that they should be like the universals for which there are no individuals.

The proponents of the existence of natural universals have explained that by existence in the external world they do not mean that the universal obtains in the realm of the external world, but that in the external world there is something existent in common among individuals, which objectively occurs in the mind, as well, where it obtains the attribute of universality.

The proponents of the existence of natural universals have reasoned that the natural universal is that which is divided into two other respectivals of essence, the mixed respectival and the abstract respectival, and the condition of being that which is to be divided is that both divisions should pertain to what exists.

For example, when the human is divided into two divisions, man and woman, the human, which is that from which they were divided, exists in both man and woman. So, natural universals should exist in both intellectual or abstract whatnesses and mixed or restricted whatnesses. Since the realm of the existence of mixed whatnesses is the external world, natural universals exist in the external world.

The soundness of this reasoning should be based on a true interpretation of mixed whatnesses that does not neglect anything [relevant]. An existent in the external world is truly a mixture of a whatness which has accidents and specific accidents, or is composed of essence and existence, but this cannot be proved— as was mentioned with regard to the way in which the mind becomes acquainted with whatnesses—and further explanation of it will be given in future lessons.

What is intended in speaking of the existence of a natural universal in the external world and its mixture with individuating accidents or existence is nothing more than that the intellect is able to abstract these various concepts from an objective existent, in other words, that the concept of natural universals and whatnesses are applicable to objective existents, so that the concepts of accidents and of existents are predicated of them. But it is not to be supposed that those who deny the existence of natural universals also deny their existence with this meaning.

On the other hand, those who deny the existence of natural universals in the external world have reasoned that in the objective realm there is nothing but the individual (instances) of whatnesses, therefore, there is no place for the existence of something else by the name of ‘natural universal’.

With this reasoning an answer may be given, that every individual of a whatness you may consider is accompanied by accidents other than the whatness itself, such as an individual human is accompanied by height, breadth, color and other accidents. Undoubtedly, these things are not part of the human whatness, therefore, variation and change in them does not imply multiplicity and change in whatness.

So, in all individuals there is the common aspect which is the natural universal.

It is clear that in this answer there is confusion between the individual by essence and the individual by accident. That is, that which is called the individual human is really a collection of individuals of various whatnesses, substantial and accidental, which due to negligence are considered as the individual human.

The principle individual which is human by essence is that same substantial individual which is the bearer of various accidents, that is, the same thing which is considered the whatish aspect of man and common among all individuals (individual accidents), and aside from this there is nothing else which might be called the 'natural universal of man'.

Finally, proponents of the existence of natural universals have claimed that by their existence in the external world it is not meant that aside from the existence of individuals there is an existence independent and separate from them, but it is considered that the existence of natural universals depends upon the existence of their individuals.

As was previously indicated, this position is open to two interpretations. One is that the existence of the individual is a means for establishing the existence of natural universals and is the cause of their occurrence, and in this way the existence of natural universals in the external world may be truly proven. But such things are not provable, for in the external world there is nothing but individuals by accident, including individuals by essence, and there is nothing which can be considered their effect.

Furthermore, universals cannot be considered the effects of individuals. The other interpretation is that the mediation of the individual for the occurrence of the natural universal is a mediation by accidents, that is, the standard for the predication of the concept of man to persons in the external world (individuals by accident) is the existence of the human substance (individual by essence, dhat) in it.

This means that this very aspect of one's humanity is a true instance by essence (bi dhat) for the concept of man. So we see that the implication of this interpretation is that it is established that there is nothing other than the individual by essence (bi dhat) along with the individual by accident.

The proponents of the existence of natural universals may content themselves with saying: "Our opinion is [that the existence of natural universals is] nothing but the correctness of the predication of a whatness of an individual, and, as has been indicated, such a meaning would not be disputed by those who deny the existence of natural universals."

For this reason some of the great scholars have said that the dispute between the proponents and opponents of the existence of natural universals is purely verbal.

The Cause of the Individuation of Whatness

As has been explained, natural universals are those whatnesses called ‘unconditioned’ which are considered as having no restrictions on them, but which can be combined with all sorts of restrictions and conditions, and for this reason they are combined in the mind with ‘negatively conditioned’ abstract whatnesses, and the attribute of universality is applied to them, while in the external world they accompany mixed whatnesses, and the attribute of particularity is applied to them.

But of course, as has been mentioned in this very lesson, the meaning of joining a natural universal with an abstract essence or with a mixed essence is not that two independent whatnesses are joined together with each other, or are merged with one another, but the view is that two respectivals are joined, that is, when a whatness becomes established in the mind, the intellect is able to view it in two ways.

In one, the basis of the concept becomes the object of attention, without consideration of whether it has or does not have specific accidents, and this is the ‘unconditioned’ respectival, the natural universal; in the second it is considered bare of accidents, and this is the ‘negatively conditioned’ respectival.

In the same way the intellect can consider the essence of the existent in the external world in two ways: first, as the basis of the essence common between the mind and the external world, that is the ‘unconditioned’ respectival, the natural universal; and secondly, with respect to being mixed with accidents, that is, the restricted ‘negatively conditioned’ respectival.

Now, if those who explain whatnesses and respectivals in this way are asked what requires the application of a natural universal to a particular while essentially it is not required to have such attribution, or, what is the standard for the individuation of essence, naturally they will answer that what requires the attribution of essence to particularity and individuation is that very mixture of it with specific accidents, a requirement of the essence for existence in the external world, so that what requires the application of the essence to universality is its lack of these accidents, required by the essence for existence in the mind.

An implication of this answer is that, if an objective existent were without accidents it would be universal, and likewise, if mental essence were attached to accidents, it would become particular. This answer, however, is by no means convincing, because this question may be repeated with respect to the essence of each accident: what causes the particularity and individuation of them, so that the essence of that which has accidents will also depend upon their specification?

Furthermore, the implication of this answer, that if the mental essence is attached to accidents it becomes particular and if the objective essence becomes bare of accidents it becomes universal, is not acceptable, for the universality of intellectual concepts is their ability to correspond to numerous instances and to reflect countless individuals, and this ability is not negated by coming to be attached to

accidents.

Also, the external existent is not such that if it is without accidents it may be supposed that it is able to have countless instances. Abstract entities are not to be considered denoting countless individuals cannot be found in them.

Thus, some philosophers have decided to search for the standard of individuation of whatnesses in other things, such as matter, time and place. But it is clear that having recourse to such things is of no use, for all of them the problem remains of the standard for the individuation of the essence of matter, or of time or place. And to approach an answer to this problem requires the individuation of other whatnesses.

In conclusion, adding a thousand universal whatnesses lacking individuation to another universal and unspecific essence will not individuate it, regardless of whether it is a substantial or accidental essence.

As far as we know, the correct way to solve the problem of the criterion for the individuation of whatnesses was first presented by the great Islamic philosopher, Farabi. According to this solution, individuation is the essential necessary result of existence, and whatness is only made determinate in the shadow of existence.

That is, no essence can be individuated or made determinate by that aspect of it in which it is a universal concept which can be applied to numerous individuals and instances, regardless of how many dozens of qualifications are added as a means to restrict it to a single individual, for, finally, the intellect will not consider it impossible that this very same qualified concept can be imagined to apply to numerous other individuals, even if in the external world there is not more than one such individual.

So, the criterion of individuation cannot be found in the addition and conjunction of other whatnesses. However, it is entified existence that essentially cannot be applied to other existents, not even to one other individual existent. And basically, application and predication and concepts of this sort are characteristic of concepts.

In conclusion, it is existence that essentially individuates. Every essence which is attributed to particularity and specification only does so in the shadow of unity with existence.

This answer of Farabi is the source of the change in the view of the philosophers, and it truly must be considered as the turning point in the history of philosophy. For until then, all philosophical discussions, no matter how unconsciously, were based on the idea that existence in the external world could only be known by whatnesses, and in truth, whatnesses figured as the pivot of all philosophical discussions.

However, since then the attention of philosophers returned to existence, and they considered entified existence as having special precepts which cannot be known by means of whatish precepts.

However, unfortunately, the illumination of this point was not able to penetrate all philosophical discussions rapidly, and change the face of philosophy very soon. It took centuries until this sprout grew

and finally the great Islamic philosopher, the late Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) officially posed the topic of the fundamentality of existence as the most basic principle of transcendent theosophy.

However, he also, in most of his discussions, did not abandon the way of his predecessors. Especially in the presentation of various philosophical topics, he followed the method of his predecessors. It was only in the final exposition of views and in drawing conclusions that he proposed his own opinion based on the fundamentality of existence.

Before concluding this discussion it is necessary to mention that the subjects discussed in this lesson, concerning the respectivals of existence and especially the existence of natural universals in the external world, take on a totally different aspect on the basis of the fundamentality of existence.

Basically, the existence of mixed whatnesses may also be considered as intellectual respectivals. Perhaps the aware reader will discover from the subjects of this lesson that the true existence of natural universals.

Lesson 26: Introduction to the Fundamentality of Existence

A Brief Look at the History of the Problem

As was previously mentioned, prior to Farabi almost all philosophical discussions were centered about whatnesses, or at least were unconsciously based on the fundamentality of whatness, and in statements reported from the Greek philosophers, no clear indications are to be found of any tendency toward the fundamentality of existence. But among the Islamic philosophers, such as Farabi, Ibn Sina, Bahmanyar and Mir Damad, not only is this tendency to found, but there are also declarations of position on the topic.

On the other hand, Shaykh al-Ishraq [Suhravardi], who paid particular attention to intellectual concepts (i'tibarat 'aqli), took up a position against the tendency toward the fundamentality of existence, and he sought by proofs for the respectival nature of the concept of existence to invalidate this tendency, although in his own statements points may be found which are more compatible with the fundamentality of existence, and which do not properly justify the doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness.

In any case, Sadr al-Muta' allihin was the first to place this topic at the head of discussions of ontology, and he suggested solutions to other problems on this basis. He says: "At first I myself was a proponent

of the fundamentality of whatness and I defended it vigorously until, by the grace of God, I found the truth of the matter."[1]

He attributed the doctrine of the fundamentality of existence to the peripatetics and the doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness to the illuminationists. However, since the topic of the fundamentality of existence had not previously been presented as an independent topic and the concept of it had not been previously explained, philosophers cannot easily be grouped specifically and definitively in relation to it, so as to characterize the peripatetics doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness as a feature of the illuminationists.

Supposing, however, that this classification is correct, one must not forget that the fundamentality of existence was not presented by the followers of the peripatetics in such a way that it could take its proper place among the problems of philosophy to shed light on the solution of other philosophical problems. Rather, the peripatetics often presented and explained philosophical problems in a way which was more compatible with the doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness.

Explanation of Terms

In order to clarify this topic and completely specify the area of controversy it is first necessary to provide explanations of the terms used regarding the problem, and then to precisely determine the purport of the topic and area of conflict.

This problem is usually presented by posing the question of whether existence is fundamental and whatness respectival or whether whatness is fundamental and existence respectival. However, Sadr al-Muta'allihin himself presented the problem in the following form. Existence possesses objective reality. The implicit purport of this is that whatness does not possess objective reality. Thus, the pivotal expressions of this topic are existence, whatness, fundamentality, respectival, and reality.

However, we have already explained the expression, 'existence,' which is sometimes used as an infinitive (masdar) (to be), and sometimes as a verbal noun (ism-e masdar) (being), and also sometimes it is used by logicians with a copulative meaning (is).

It is clear that in this philosophical discussion the copulative meaning is not under consideration, and likewise the infinitive which indicates a relation between subject and object is not meant. The meaning of the verbal noun, in the restricted sense of occurrence, is also not meant, unless the above restriction is removed so that it may be predicated of objective realities including the sacred Essence of God.

The expression 'whatness' (mahiyyah) which is a contrived infinitive (masdar ja'li) derived from 'What is it?' (ma huwa?) is used as a philosophic term in the form of a verbal noun (ism-e masdar, 'what-is-it-ness') but with the same condition of dissociation from the sense of occurrence, so that it may be predicated of an essence.

This term is used in philosophy in two senses, one of which is more general than the other. The specific sense is defined as “that which is said in answer to the question ‘What is it?’” and naturally it is applied in the case of an existent which can be known by the mind, in technical terms, that which possesses specific limits of existence, which are reflected in the mind in the form of primary intelligibles (whatish concepts).

For this reason it is said that God the Almighty does not have a whatness: “There is no whatness of the Necessary Existent.” Proponents of the fundamentality of existence say with regard to the objective reality of existence, “Existence itself has no whatness,” and sometimes that “it does not have an intellectual form.”

But the more general sense is defined as ‘that which the thing itself is.’ This includes both the objective reality of existence as well as the sacred Essence of God. It is in accordance with this meaning that it is said with regard to God Almighty, “The whatness of God is the same as His identity (inniyyah).”

In this discussion what is meant by the expression ‘whatness’ is the former meaning, not the concept represented by the word whatness itself in the sense of primary predication. Rather the discussion is about the instances of this concept, that is, whatness in the sense of common predication, such as ‘man’. For the proponents of the fundamentality of whatness also admit that this concept itself is a respectival concept.[2] In other words, the discussion is about whatish concepts (mafahim mahuwi), not the concept of whatness.

The expression ‘fundamentality’ (asalah)which is used with the literal meaning of being a root and is the opposite of ‘far‘iyyah’ which has the meaning of being an offshoot in this context, is employed with a specific meaning as the opposite of ‘i‘tibari’ (respectival), and their precise meanings are jointly clarified.

In Lesson Fifteen several technical meanings of the expression i‘tibari (respectival) were mentioned, according to some of which, even the concept of existence was called a respectival concept. But in this context, the meaning of i‘tibar, being the opposite of asil (fundamental), is different. The respectival nature of the concept of existence, according to the previous meaning, is compatible with the doctrine of the fundamentality of existence and the ‘respectival’ nature of whatness according to the meaning appropriate to this context.

What is meant by the two opposite concepts of asil and i‘tibari here pertains to the question as to which of the two, the whatish concepts or the concept of existence, refers to entified reality in itself (dhatan) without mediation, in the precise philosophical sense.

That is, after it is accepted that an objective reality is reflected in the mind in the form of a ‘simple existential proposition’ (halliyyah basitah), whose subject is a whatish concept and whose predicate is the concept of existence (wujud) which by means of a [morphologically] derived predicate may be put in the form of the concept of ‘existent’ (mawjud), so that each of these terms will be predicable of that entified reality, so that it may be said, for example, “This foreigner is human,” as it can be said, “This

person is existent." Neither of these is metaphorical from a common or literary point of view.

At the same time, from a precise philosophic point of view, it may be asked—in view of the unity and simplicity of the entified reality and the multiplicity of these concepts and aspects, which is characteristic of the mental realm—whether the entified reality (of which the concept of existence is predicated with the special attention of the intellect and by mediation of the whatish concept, and which [i.e. the concept of existence] for this reason is a secondary and subordinate aspect) is to be identified with the whatish aspect, or whether the objective reality is that very aspect denoted by the concept of existence (so that the whatish concept is merely a mental reflection of the limits and framework of the reality and objective existence), and in fact it is the whatish concepts which are secondary and subordinate.

With regard to this question, if we take the first alternative and understand entified reality to be the unmediated instance of whatness, we would be upholding the fundamentality of whatness and the respectivalness of existence. And if we take the second alternative and understand entified reality to be the unmediated instance of the concept of existence, and we consider whatish concepts a mental framework setting the limits for finite realities, we will be proponents of the fundamentality of existence and the respectivalness of whatness.

The expression haqiqah employed by Sadr al-Muta'allihin in discussing this problem is also an expression used in various senses, such as the following:

1. Haqiqah [literal usage] is the use of a word in its literal meaning, as opposed to majaz, its metaphorical usage, i.e., with another meaning with a sort of relation to the literal meaning. For example, the use of the word 'lion' in the sense of the well-known wild animal is haqiqah, while its use to mean a powerful man is a metaphor.

2. Haqiqah [truth] also has the meaning of knowledge that corresponds to reality, as in the previous discussions of epistemology.

3. Haqiqah may have the meaning of whatness, as when it is said of two individual humans that they are 'muttafiq al-haqiqah' [i.e., of a common reality].

4. Haqiqah in the sense of entified reality.

5. Haqiqah, in the terminology of mysticism (`irfan), is used in the sense of absolute independent existence which is confined to God, the Supreme, and it is so used in contrast to the existence of creatures, which is said to be 'metaphorical' (majazi).

6. Haqiqah also has the meaning of core and inner reality (batin), as when it is said that haqiqah of the Divine Essence cannot be fathomed by the intellect.

It is clear that the intended meaning of haqiqah here is that of the fourth term.

Explanation of the Point of Contention

There is no doubt that every existent which has a whatish concept may be predicated by that concept, as the concept 'human being' may be predicated of persons in the external world.

Likewise, there is no doubt that the concept of existence (in the form of derivative predication (haml ishtiqaq), e.g., mawjud, (existent), derived from wujud, (existence)) may be predicated of every existent in the external world, and even in the case of God, the Supreme, Who does not have a whatness, it may be said that He is existent.

In other words, from an intellectual perspective every existent that has contingent existence has two aspects: one is the aspect of whatness, and the other is the aspect of existence. As the philosophers have said, "Every contingent thing is a composite duality and composed of whatness and existence." This is the same matter which we have repeatedly indicated, namely that reflections of objective realities in the mind take the form of propositions which are usually (that is, for things with whatnesses) composed of a whatish concept and the concept of existence.

With regard to this matter, if it is supposed that for each of these two concepts there exists an objective entified aspect—that the whatish concept refers to one entified aspect and the concept of existence refers to the other entified aspect, which are joined together in the external world—or, in other words, an existent is composed of existence and whatness, and this composition is objective and entified, the meaning of this supposition would be that both whatness and existence are fundamental (asil).

But this supposition is not correct, for if each existent were to possess two entified aspects, each of them would be reflected in the mind in the form of a different proposition, which would include two concepts, and for each of them one would have to suppose another entified aspect, and this process would be continued without end, and the result of this would be that every simple existent should be composed of an infinite number of entified objective aspects.

This is what is meant by the statement of the philosophers that the difference between existence and whatness is a mental difference: "Existence is an accident of whatness in conception, and they are united in identity."

That is, the predication and characterization ('urudh) of existence to whatness, which requires each of them to be different from the other, obtains exclusively in the realm of mental conception, otherwise in external identity (huwiyyah) they are one with each other. So, it cannot be that both whatness and existence are fundamental and considered to have entified reality.

Likewise, both cannot be viewed as respectivals. For ultimately, it is that very simple proposition which denotes entified reality and which must include a concept corresponding to entified reality. So, there is a choice between whatness being fundamental and existence being respectival or vice versa. Therefore,

the problem may be posed in the form of two hypotheses based on several principles:

1. The acceptance of the concept of existence as an independent substantival concept, in technical terms, the acceptance of 'predicative existence'. For if the concept of existence is confined to the copulative meaning and is relational in propositions it would be impossible to suppose that it should refer to entified reality, and in the words of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, that it should possess entified reality (haqiqah 'ayniyyah), and there would be no alternative but the fundamentality of whatness.

2. Acceptance of the analysis of contingent existents into two (concepts): the concept of existence and whatish concepts. That is, if someone imagines that the concept of existence is not something other than the concept of whatness, as has been reported of some of the mutakallimin, according to whom the meaning of existence in every proposition is the same as the meaning of the whatness which makes up its subject, on this assumption there remains no room for doubt between the fundamentality of whatness and the fundamentality of existence, and it would determine the fundamentality of whatness. But the invalidity of this supposition became clear in Lesson Twenty-Two.

3. Acceptance of the fact that the combination of existence and whatness is a mental combination, that in the context of the external world there do not exist two distinct aspects, one of which corresponds to the whatish concept and the other of which to the concept of existence, that is, the hypothesis of the fundamentality of both is incorrect, as explained.

4. On the basis of these three principles, the question may be presented in this form: Does entified reality principally correspond to the whatish concept, such that the concept of existence is predicated of it accidentally, or the reverse, does entified reality principally correspond to the concept of existence, such that the whatish concept is predicated of it accidentally?

In other words: Is entified reality in itself an instance of whatness or existence? On the first hypothesis, knowledge of whatnesses and the principles pertaining to whatness is the same as knowledge of entified reality; but on the second hypothesis, knowledge of whatnesses means the knowledge of the framework of existents and their limits which are reflected in the mind, not knowledge of their entified contents.

The Benefits of the Discussion

It is possible that one may imagine that the discussion about the fundamentality of existence or whatness is an academic exercise and that it has no relevance to the solution of important philosophical problems, for these problems have been solved both by the proponents of the fundamentality of existence as well as the proponents of the fundamentality of whatness.

But this idea is incorrect, for, as will become clear in the course of future discussions, the solution of many of the important problems of philosophy depends on the fundamentality of existence, and the way of solving them through the fundamentality of whatness is unsatisfactory and leads to a dead end. As we

have seen with regard to the problem of the individuation of whatnesses, there is no correct solution on the basis of the fundamentality of whatness.

Of course, this problem, compared to more important problems [whose solutions are] based on the fundamentality of existence, is relatively minor. If we were to mention all such cases, our discussion would become too long. Furthermore, the explanation of the relation of these problems to the fundamentality of existence requires the presentation of these problems and reference to some sensitive points which must be explained in their appropriate place.

Here we will only mention two very important problems of philosophy, each of which in its own turn may serve as a basis for solving other valuable problems: one of them is the problem of causation and the reality of the relation between cause and effect, the conclusion of which, based on the fundamentality of existence, is the dependence of the effect on the 'being- granting cause' ('illat-e hasti bakhsh), on the basis of which very important problems can be solved, including the refutation of jabr (predestination) and tafwidh (libertarianism) and [explanation of] the unity of [Divine] acts (tawhid af'ali). Another problem is that of substantial motion, intensifying (ishtidadi) and evolutionary (takamuli), whose interpretation depends on the acceptance of the fundamentality of existence, the elaboration of which will be presented in its proper place.

Therefore, the problem of the fundamentality of existence is one of the most serious and fundamental which is worthy of study, and must never be treated in a casual and offhand manner.

1. Asfar, Vol. 1, p. 49.
2. Cf. Suhrawardi's Muqawamat, p. 175; Mutarahat, p. 361, in Henry Corbin, ed., Shihaboddin Yahya Sohravardi, Œuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques, Tome1 (Tehran: Académie Impériale Iranienne de Philosophie, 1976).

Lesson 27: The Fundamentality of Existence

Arguments for the Fundamentality of Existence

Our aim is to know whether entified reality is the same as that which is denoted by whatish concepts or whether whatnesses only represent limits and frameworks for objective realities. If whatnesses only represent limits of existence, that which denotes the reality itself and the contents of a conceptual framework is the concept of existence which is considered to indicate reality itself.

The mind, by means of the concept of existence, understands reality itself. In order to know whether whatness is fundamental or existence, there are various ways, of which the easiest is reflection upon these concepts themselves and their meanings.

When we focus upon a whatish concept, such as the concept of 'man,' we see that existence may be negated of it without changing its meaning, no matter how many external existents to which it applies, and of which it may be predicated, where this predication is literal, according to ordinary language, and not metaphorical.

This is a matter upon which philosophers are agreed, namely, that whatness, in that it is whatness, is neither an existent nor a nonexistent. It neither requires existence nor nonexistence (al-mahiyyah min haythu hiya hiya laysat illa hiya, la mawjudatun wa la ma'dumah, i.e., Whatness as such is what it is [and only that], it is neither existent, nor nonexistent).

It is for this same reason that whatness may be both the subject for existence and for nonexistence. Therefore, whatness in and of itself cannot represent objective reality, otherwise the predication 'nonexistent' to it would be considered the predication of one of a pair of contradictories to the other, such as is the case with the predication of existence to nothingness.

Another reason that whatness does not represent entified reality is that in order to denote an objective reality we have no choice but to employ a proposition which includes the concept of existence and until we predicate existence of a whatness we will not have spoken of its real occurrence. And this very point is the best reason for claiming that it is the concept of existence which denotes entified reality. According to Bahmanyar, in the book Al-Tahsil, "How can existence not possess entified truth when its meaning is nothing but real occurrence?"[1]

Some of the advocates of the fundamentality of whatness have said: "It is true that whatness itself in itself lacks existence and nothingness, and does not demand either of them, and in this sense can be considered respectival, but when it is related to the Maker (Ja'il) it obtains objective reality. And it is with regard to this matter that it is said that whatness is fundamental."

It is clear that a relation that accompanies the occurrence of whatness in reality is due to causing it to exist, that is, the granting of existence to it, and this shows that its reality is that very existence which is granted to it.

Another reason for the respectivalness of whatness is that basically the analysis of entified reality into two aspects, whatness and existence, occurs only in the mind through acquired knowledge. In presentational knowledge no trace of whatness is found.

So, if whatness were fundamental, then it would have to be realized through presentational knowledge, as well, for it is in knowledge by presence that entified reality itself is perceived or observed internally without the intermediary of any mental form or concept.

It is possible that to this argument the objection will be raised that just as there is no trace of whatish concepts in knowledge by presence, we see no trace in it of the concept of existence. In other words, just as whatish concepts are obtained by mental analysis, the concept of existence also occurs in the

realm of mental analysis. Therefore, it cannot be said that existence is also fundamental.

In response to this objection, it must be said that there is no doubt that the two aspects, whatness and existence, can be distinguished from one another only in the realm of the mind. Their duality is specific to the realm of mental analysis, and for the same reason the concept of existence also, insofar as it is a mental concept, is not the same as objective reality, and is not fundamental.

But, nevertheless, this same concept is a means for denoting that which has objective reality, from which the whatish concept is abstracted, and this is what is meant by the fundamentality of existence and its having entified reality.

In addition to this, it became clear in the previous lecture that the choice between the fundamentality of existence and that of whatness is exhaustive, so that with the invalidity of the fundamentality of whatness, the fundamentality of existence is established.

Another argument for the fundamentality of existence and the respectivalness of whatness is that, as was mentioned in Lesson Twenty–Five, an essential aspect of whatness is that it is not an individuating aspect, while the whatish aspect of external realities is an individuating aspect and is not universal, applicable to [different] individuals, and no external realities as such can be subjects of the attribute of universality and the lack of individuality.

In other words, individuality and particularity can only be applied to a whatness when it has external existence. From this it is to be understood that whatish aspects are those conceptual and mental aspects that have the capability of being applied to countless individuals, and entified reality is specific to existence, that is, entified reality is the essential instance of existence.

Another argument for the fundamentality of existence also can be raised, based on that which is accepted by the philosophers, that the sacred Divine Essence is free of any limitation which could be denoted by whatish concepts; that is, there is no question of Its having a whatness, and He is the most fundamental of realities and is the bestower of reality to all existents. If external reality were an essential instance of whatness, then the reality of the Divine Essence would also have to be a whatness like other whatnesses.

Of course, this argument is based on a premise which must be proved in the section on theology, but since this is accepted by the proponents of the fundamentality of whatness also, it can also be used here, and at the very least may be used in argument with them as ‘sound dialectic’.[2]

Philosophical Metaphor

Here it is possible that a doubt will come to mind according to which the basis of the fundamentality of existence is that entified reality is an essential instance of existence, which implies that it will accidentally be an instance of whatness.

This means that the predication of a whatness, such as man, to individuals external to it will be accidental and by occurrence (‘urudh), and the characterization (ittisaf) of this concept will be metaphorical, which can be negated. Therefore, it must be that the negation of the concept of man of its individuals in the external world is correct, and this is nothing but sophistry.

The answer is that just as in the first argument [for the fundamentality of existence] we mentioned that the predication of every whatness to individuals external to it, from the ordinary viewpoint and from that of grammar, is a true predication without any figure of speech; however, precise philosophical precepts do not follow those of ordinary [language] and grammar with respect to the literal and the metaphorical.

So the key to their understanding cannot be sought among the rules related to language. Often these rules will be employed in such a way that with respect to grammar something will be literal, while with respect to philosophy, it will be metaphorical, and vice versa.

For example, the scholars of grammar and theoretical jurisprudence (usul al– fiqh) say that the literal meaning of ‘derivatives’ (mushtaqqat) is something possessing the whatness of the source of derivation (ishtiqaq) (“The essential meaning of mushtaqq [derivative] is something with an established source”); for instance, ‘alim (knower) means someone who has ‘ilm (knowledge) and mawjud (existent) means something which has wujud (existence).

So, if the expression mawjud (existent) is used for entified existence (wujud) itself, then from the point of view of grammar, this would have to be a metaphorical usage, but from the point of view of philosophy, it is not.

The same point applies here. From the viewpoint of ordinary usage, there is no separation between the limit and the limited, and just as a limited existent is considered to be a real thing, its limits are also construed to be real entified things, while from the point of view of philosophy this is not the case, and the limits of existents, in fact, are abstracted from matters relating to nonexistence. Their being considered as real is metaphorical and respectival.

In order to make this clearer to the mind, the following example is given. If we take a piece of paper and from it we cut the various shapes of a triangle, a square, etc., we will have bits of paper, each of which, in addition to being paper, will have another attribute by the name of triangle, or square, etc., such that prior to cutting the paper they did not have these attributes.

The ordinary construal of this case is that specific forms and attributes came into existence in the paper, and that aspects of existence were added to the paper, while nothing came into existence in the mentioned paper except for edges which are aspects relating to nonexistence.

In other words, the edges which form the limits and bounds of various shapes are nothing but the ultimate ends of the surface of various bits of paper, and even the surface itself is really the ultimate end of the thickness of the paper.

However, these limits and bounds which have the nature of nonexistence, are construed from the ordinary superficial perspective as existing things and entified attributes, and the negation of their existence is considered a sort of denial of what is self-evident.

We should add that the same is true of the whatish concept (like paper in the example) in relation to entified reality; that is, it refers to specific limits of reality (of course, conceptual limits, not geometrical limits), limits which are considered as the empty molds for realities, and their contents are composed of entified reality.

Whatnesses are nothing but these very conceptual molds for external reality. But since they are the means and mirrors for the knowledge of external existents and cannot be viewed independently, they are construed as external realities themselves. This is the meaning of the respectivalness of whatness, that is, whatnesses are supposed to be realities, or the concepts are considered as the external instances themselves.

Thus, the mind may be compared to a mirror the reflections appearing in which are whatish concepts by means of which we are informed of the limits of external realities and kinds of existence. In this view, [wherein the mind plays the function of] an instrument and mirror, we do not notice the reflections themselves independently, but rather by way of them our attention is directed to that which is reflected, that is, the entified reality. For this reason we suppose that the reflections are that which is reflected.

Likewise, when one looks at one' s reflection in a mirror one supposes that one is looking at oneself while that which is seen in the mirror is a reflection of the colors and contours of one' s face, that is, a reflection of limits and not of that which is limited itself. However, from a superficial point of view we can say that that which we see in the mirror is our own faces.

The predication of whatnesses to existents is of the same sort. However much from the ordinary way of looking at things it is considered to be a true predication, from the exact perspective of philosophy, it becomes clear that it is only a reflection of their molds, not of them themselves. That is why Sadr al-Muta'allihin repeatedly emphasized in his books that `whatness is a phantom of the mind or intellectual mold for entified reality.'[3]

With these explanations it has become clear that the real locus of whatnesses, insofar as they are whatnesses, is only the mind and its entified occurrence is its individual existence. From the exact perspective of philosophy, the whatness is never in itself that which entifiedly occurs [that is, as an entity]. So, the existence of mixed whatnesses, and consequently, the existence of natural universals in the external world, may also only be accepted as respectival, as was indicated at the end of Lesson Twenty-Five.

Hence, it may be said that to claim true existence for natural universals is the same as holding the position of the fundamentality of whatness, and to claim that the existence of natural universals is accidental and that individuals are the means of the occurrence ('urudh) of existence for natural

universals is really the same position as the fundamentality of existence; that is, natural universals, which are the same as whatnesses, are respectival things. Their relation to existence and occurrence in the external world is accidental and a kind of philosophical metaphor.

The Resolution of Two Doubts

The proponents of the fundamentality of whatness have raised certain doubts, among which two of the most important are:

First Objection: If existence were basic and possessed entified reality, it would have to be predicable by the concept 'existent,' and this would mean that existence possesses existence. So, another entified existence would have to be posited for it, which in turn would become the subject of 'existent.' This process would continue without end.

This implies that every existent possesses infinite existences! From this it is to be understood that existence is respectival, and that the repeated predication of 'existent' to it is a product of this mental derivation.

Answer: The origin of this fallacy is reliance on grammatical rules according to which the word 'existent' (mawjud) with regard to its being a derivative (mushtaqq), refers to an 'essence' which is posited for the source of the derivation (mabda' ishtiqaq) (existence, or wujud in this case).

This implies the plurality of essence and source (mabda'). Thus, when the concept 'existent' is predicated of entified existence, it must be supposed that it is an essence for which is established the source of derivation, which is something else, and so on and so forth.

However, we have repeatedly warned that philosophical problems cannot be solved or settled on the basis of linguistic rules of grammar and syntax. The concept of 'existent' in philosophical usage is merely an indicator of entified objective occurrence, regardless of whether the aspect of objective occurrence in the realm of mental analysis is other than an aspect of the subject of the proposition or not.

For example, when this concept [i.e., existent] is predicated of a whatness, there is considered to be a plurality and difference between the subject and predicate, but when it is predicated of entified existence itself, this means that objective existence is the very aspect of its being existent.

In other words, the predication of a derivative (mushtaqq) to an essence is not always an indication of plurality and difference between the essence and the source of the derivation. Rather, sometimes it indicates their unity. From this it is to be concluded that the meaning of the predication of 'existent' to entified existence is that it itself is that very being existent and entified reality and source of abstraction of the concept 'existent,' not that it becomes an existent by means of some other existence.

Second Objection: The other fallacy is the claims that if entified reality is an essential instance of

existence this would mean that every reality exists by itself. This implies that every objective reality would be a necessary existent (wajib al- wujud), while only God, the Supreme, is existent-by-Himself.

Answer: The origin of this fallacy is a confusion between two senses of 'essentially' (bi al-dhat), and it is really an error of equivocation.

To explain, the expression 'essentially' (bi al-dhat, i.e., essentially or by itself) is sometimes used as the opposite of 'by another' (bi al-ghayr), meaning that it has no intermediary by which it is established, as it is said with respect to God, the Supreme, that He is 'existent-by-Himself' (mawjud bi al-dhat) or 'necessarily existent-by-Himself,' that is, not through something else, and He is not caused by any creator. To put it differently, the predication of 'existent' or 'necessary existent' to Him does not need any intermediary by which it would be established.

The same expression, essentially (bi al-dhat), is sometimes also used as the opposite of accidentally (bi al-'aradh), meaning that the predication of the predicate does not need an intermediary in its occurrence ('urudh), even if it does need an intermediary in its establishment (thubut), as, in accordance with the fundamentality of existence, we say: "Entified reality is an 'essential' instance of existent, but whatness is an accidental instance of it."

According to the second sense, both the existence of God, the Supreme, which has no intermediary in its establishment and according to the first sense is also 'essential,' is an essential instance of existence, and also the existence of creatures, which is established by an intermediary, caused by the Creator.

This means that being an existent is the true attribute of their existence, not the attribute of their whatness. From a philosophical point of view, existence is accidentally attributed to whatnesses.

1. Cf. Al-Tahsil, p. 286
2. Sound dialectic, jadal ahsan, is argument based on premises that are not only accepted by toth sides but are also correct. [Tr.]
3. Cf. Al-Asfar, Vol. 1, p. 198; Vol. 2, p. 236.

Lesson 28: Unity and Multiplicity

Remarks on Some Issues Pertaining to Whatnesses

Essential concepts are either simple or compound. Two simple whatish concepts naturally cannot have a common aspect and will be completely distinct from one another, for it is supposed that there is a common aspect between them, which would be their own simple whatness, so that there would be no other aspect by which they could be distinguished, then they would not be numerically distinct and there

would not be more than a single whatness.

If it is supposed that in addition to their common aspect each of them has a distinguishing aspect, then each of them would be composed of two whatish aspects, which is contrary to the supposition that they are simple.

So, two simple whatish concepts must be distinct in their entirety (bi tamam al-dhat). However, if one or both of them are compound, they may be supposed to have different forms.

In classical logic, compound whatnesses have at least two parts, one common part called the genus, which is a vague and indeterminate concept, obtained through comparison (tardid) among several different species, and one specific part called the difference, which causes the determination of the genus (to a single species). It is said that the whatness of man is composed of the concept of 'animal' and the concept of 'rational,' the first of which is common between the species of animals, and the second of which is the specific difference of man.

The concept of genus, in turn, can also be compound, having a higher and more general genus, as the concept of 'body' includes animal, vegetable and mineral. But the concepts of differences are considered simple and incapable of being compound.

Finally, for all compound whatnesses, ten highest simple genera, or ten 'categories' are supposed, as follows: substance (jawhar), quantity (kamiyyah), quality (kayfiyyah), relation (idhafah), posture (wadh'), spatial locus (ayna), temporal locus (mata), possession (jadah), action (an yaf'al) (states of gradual effects), passion (an yanfa'il) (states of being affected passively and gradually).[1]

Regarding the number of the categories (the highest genera), and whether they are all really whatish concepts (first intelligibles), or at least whether some of them (such as relation and categories which are composed of relational concepts) are secondary intelligibles, there is controversy among the philosophers, but we shall not consider this matter further.

According to the logical apparatus of genus and difference, and based upon [the idea that] all compound whatnesses lead to some categories, they may be distinguished in two ways. One is a distinction among them in their entirety, and that is when two whatnesses pertaining to two categories are compared there is not even a common genus between them, for example, the concept of man and the concept of whiteness.

Secondly, their distinction may be partial, in case two whatnesses are compared from a single category, for example, the concept of horse and the concept of cow, which are common in animality, corporeality, and substantiality.

It may be concluded that whole whatnesses (species), if simple, will be distinguished and distinct from each other in their entirety; likewise if they are compound and from two categories. Also differences and

highest genera, which are all considered to be simple concepts, are distinguished from one another in their entireties. No genus may be supposed to include all whatnesses. Therefore, there is not even one whatish element which can be considered to be common among all whatnesses.

On the other hand, the concept of existence, which is a secondary philosophical intelligible, is considered to be a simple, determinate, general and absolute concept which when added to a whatness individuates and limits it. The concept of existence specified and limited in this way is called a 'share' (hissah, lit. also 'part,' 'quotient') of the universal concept of existence.

In this way, expressions such as 'simplicity,' 'composition,' 'indeterminate,' 'determinate,' 'common' and 'distinct,' 'general' and 'specified,' 'absolute' and 'limited,' have appeared in the cases above, and the expression 'individuation' (tashakhkhus) mentioned in previous chapters, should be added to them.

But among these there are two pivotal concepts, the concepts of unity and multiplicity. We now turn to the explanation of these two concepts.

Types of Unity and Multiplicity

Each, specific whatness differs from the others. If two whatnesses are simple, then they will not even have a single common aspect, and likewise two compound whatnesses of two categories also will not have a common aspect. In view of the fact that a whatness may be considered by itself or along with other whatnesses, two opposite concepts may be abstracted: 'one' and 'many.'

The unity which is related to each complete whatness is called specific unity. The reiteration of its form in one or more minds does not damage its unity, for what is meant is conceptual unity, not the unity of its mental existence.

Likewise, when we consider a common essential aspect of several compound whatnesses, another sort of unity is attributed to it, called generic unity.

In contrast to these two types of unity, there is also numerical unity, which is predicated to each individual belonging to a whatness. Its criterion is the same individuation the ancient philosophers considered to be due to individuating accidents. The correct [position] is that this individuation and this unity are essential attributes of individual existence, accidentally attributed to whatness.

The individuals of a whatness which have an essential numerical multiplicity are called, 'one by species,' likewise the species which are of a single genus and are essentially multiple in species are called 'one by genus.' It is clear that these two types of unity are not true attributes of individuals and species, but are attributed to them accidentally.

It is to be concluded from this that essential whatish unity is an attribute of species and genus, and is predicated accidentally to individuals and species. To the contrary, individual unity is really an attribute of

individual existence and is attributed accidentally to whatness.

On the other hand, individuals in the external world have numerically distinct existences to which multiplicity is essentially attributed. However, considering that they are of a single whatness, they are called 'one by species,' and various species which essentially are a multiplicity of species are called 'one by genus' with respect to their unity of genus.

Therefore, each existence in the external world has an individual unity. When more than one of these is taken into consideration, multiplicity is attributed to them. Each of these two attributes, which are abstracted concepts and secondary intelligibles, are abstracted, according to [the doctrine of] the fundamentality of existence, from the existence of the existents. Hence, the existence also has unity and multiplicity beyond whatish unity and multiplicity.

From this it may be guessed that various numbers, which are instances of multiplicity, are also secondary intelligibles, not primary intelligibles or whatish categories as most philosophers have held. Other reasons could also be mentioned in support of this, which shall not be presented here.

On the other hand, according to the fundamentality of whatness, whatish multiplicity is always a sign of the multiplicity of entified objective existents, for each of them by supposition refers to a specific entified aspect, although the multiplicity of existents in the external world does not always imply whatish multiplicity, as the multiplicity of individuals of a single whatness is not incompatible with the unity of their whatness.

With attention to this point, the question may be raised as to whether the multiplicity of whatnesses, in accordance with the fundamentality of existence, reveals the multiplicity of their existences or whether it is possible that several whatnesses are abstracted from one existence, at least in different stages.

In this way, other questions about existence may be raised, such as whether the existences of like complete whatnesses, especially simple whatnesses, must necessarily also be distinct, isolated and distinguished from each other, or whether it is possible that they are governed by a kind of unity specific to existence.

However, prior to beginning the discussion of this subject, an explanation is necessary about the use of the expression wahdah (unity) with respect to existence.

The Unity of the Concept of Existence

Conceptual unity and multiplicity are not limited to whatnesses, even if the terms 'unity of species' and 'unity of whatness' are specific to them. Every concept, no matter whether it is a philosophical or logical secondary intelligible, is incompatible with another concept, such that unity may be attributed to each of them, and multiplicity to the collection of them. Plurality and multiplicity in equivocal concepts and conceptual unity in univocal concepts especially have many applications.

The concept of existence, which is also considered as a philosophical secondary intelligible, is incompatible with other concepts. As was mentioned in Lesson Twenty–Two, it is a single concept which is univocal among various instances.

This concept not only is unlike compound whatnesses, which reduce to genus and difference, but because of being simple it is also devoid of any other kind of composition. On the other hand, it cannot be considered a part of any whatness, as genus or difference, for it is not a whatish concept.

It follows that although the concept of existence has neither unity of species nor unity of genus, nevertheless, as is required by univocity, conceptual unity may be attributed to it, as with other secondary intelligibles.

However, the conceptual unity of existence does not mean that it is equally and uniformly applied to all of its instances. Rather, it is a 'graduated' concept, whose predications to cases differ. In order to clarify this point, it is necessary to explain the terms 'graduated' (mushakkak) and 'uniform' (mutawati).

The Graduated and the Uniform

Universal concepts, with regard to the quality of application to instances, are divided into two groups:

Uniform concepts are those whose applications to all individuals are equal, and the individuals of which have no priority or precedence or other differences in being instances of that concept. For example, the concept of body is equally predicated of all its instances. There is no body which in respect to its corporeality has any preference over other bodies, although each of the bodies has its own specific [properties] and some of them have advantages over the others, but with regard to the application of the concept of body, there is no difference among them.

However, graduated concepts are those whose applications to individuals, their instances, are different. Some of them have preference over others with respect to being instances of such concepts, as all lines are not the same with respect to being instances of length, and the instantiation of a line of one meter is more than the instantiation of a line of one centimeter. Or, the concept of black is not predicated equally to all its instances, some of which are blacker than others.

The concept of existence is of this sort, and the application of existence to things is not equal. There are priorities and precedences among them, as in the application of existence to God the Almighty, which has no kind of limitation and cannot be compared with its application to other existences.

There are discussions about the mystery of the differences in the applications of graduated concepts, and about whether whatish concepts are capable of being graduated in and of themselves or not, and basically, how many kinds of graduation there are.

The proponents of the fundamentality of whatness have accepted several kinds of graduation, such as

amount (e.g., length) in quantities, and graduation in weakness and intensity (e.g., color) in qualities. However, proponents of the fundamentality of existence consider graduation in whatness to be accidental, and the sources of these differences are presented as differences in existence.

In addition to this, Sadr al-Muta'allihin and the followers of his transcendent theosophy call this sort of graduation 'common graduation.' They hold that there is another sort of graduation for the entified truth of existence which is called `special graduation,' a feature of which is that two instances of existence will not be independent of each other, but one will be considered as a level of the other. Some others of a gnostic disposition also mention another kind of graduation, which need not be explained.

1. This list is the same as Aristotle's (and that of Ibn Sina). Note that possession is usually called milk in Arabic; here it is jidah. Cf. Parviz Morewedge, The Metaphysica of Avicenna (ibn Sina) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 187. For a more elaborate treatment of the Aristotelian categories in Islamic philosophy, see D. Gutas, Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

Lesson 29: Unity and Multiplicity in Entified Existence

Individual Unity

In the previous lesson there was a discussion of one kind of unity of entified realities, and that was the unity of each individual that is individuated from a whatness, that is, when the intellect considers an individual of a whatness and compares it with the whatness itself, and the difference is noted that whatness can be applied to individuals but individuals do not have this feature, 'individuality' is abstracted from the individual.

When an individual is compared with several individuals, and numerousity is not seen in a single individual, unity is abstracted from it. Hence it is said, "Existence, individuality and unity are equivalent, and whatever exists is individuated and a unit in this respect." Of course, it should be noted that what is meant by this unity is individual unity, not absolute unity, and it does not include specific unity or generic unity.

At this point the question will be raised of how the unity of an objective existent can be known. How can we be certain that an existent which we have imagined to be a 'unit' is really 'one existent' and has 'one existence'?

Philosophers often dismissively answered this question by an appeal to its clarity, but there are murky points in the environs of this question which must be explained properly.

If an existent is simple and unanalyzable, such as the sacred Divine Essence, and all immaterial things, it will naturally have a single existence. Of course, the existence of nonmaterial things and their simplicity are proved by demonstration, and only the existence of the soul and its simplicity can be consciously discovered through presentational knowledge. In general it may be said that every simple existent has a unitary existence.

However, with respect to material and analyzable existents it is not easy to prove their unity. Superficially, every existent which is continuous, and the supposed parts of which are not separated from each other, is considered to be a unitary existent having a unitary existence. But when we examine this matter closely, we are faced with two murky points.

One is whether bodies which appear to be continuous and monolithic are really so, or whether we merely imagine them to be connected due to visual errors.

Providing an answer to this question is the job of the natural sciences, and as far as we know, with the help of scientific instruments it has been proven that bodies are not really continuous and are only apparently monolithic, and they are composed of very tiny particles which are separate from each other.

From a philosophical point of view, we may say that since no body lacks extension, each of the particles of bodies, no matter how tiny, will ultimately be continuous and have unity of continuity.

The second murky and questionable point, which is more important, is whether, supposing that the continuity of the parts of a corporeal body is established, how is it to be known that there is no other sort of multiplicity in it?

It may be replied that a continuous and monolithic existent will not have actual multiplicity, however much it may be analyzable and multiple potentially, but if it is analyzed, other existents will be obtained each of which will have its own special unity.

This reply, although it may be correct for the geometrical amounts and quantities of bodies, cannot be considered a complete and comprehensive answer. For with respect to this question the point may be raised as to whether, supposing that two different bodies are brought together so that there remains no space between them and, by way of a rough example, if two pieces of metal are welded together, can they be considered to be a unitary existent having unitary existence, or must they be considered multiple, having several existences?

It is possible that an answer will be given to this question according to which since two pieces of metal possess two different whatnesses, and naturally each of them is a different individual from the other, therefore they cannot be considered to be a single existent.

However, this answer is based on the supposition that the multiplicity of whatnesses reveals a multiplicity in entified existence, while this has not been proven. In other words, the multiplicity which has been

established here is really an attribute of whatness not of existence, while the discussion concerns unity and plurality of entified existence.

On the other hand, a more precise question may be posed as to how we know that a continuous existent possessing a continuous unity does not possess two superimposed existences, such that one rides upon the other and sense is not able to differentiate their duality?

To explain, just as each of our senses is able to perceive one of the features of bodies (for example, our eyes see its color, our olfactory sense smells its scent, and our gustatory sense perceives its taste) without removing the unity of the body which possesses all of these senses, in the same way, it is possible that there may be a multiplicity in bodies which our senses do not have the power to perceive.

In other words, the unity and multiplicity of sensory perceptions does not provide sufficient reason for the unity and multiplicity of entified existence. Hence, there remains the possibility that a body which itself has geometrically continuous unity possesses another multiplicity, as some philosophers have held with respect to different substantial forms, for example, an animal is known to possess several forms vertically: an elemental form, a mineral form, a vegetable form and an animal form.

The answer to this question is to be found in the ensuing lessons, and here we may say in summary form that the composition of bodies can be imagined to takes several forms:

1. Composition of quantitative parts which do not have actual existence, but which come about as a result of analysis. This kind of composition is not at all contrary to actual unity.

2. Composition of matter and form, under the supposition that the existence of matter is a potential existence. This form also does not interfere with unity, and from one view it is similar to the previous supposition.

3. Composition of matter and form, under the supposition that matter also has actual existence other than the existence of the form. Also, composition among forms are each of which is vertically above the other. According to this supposition, an existent is considered a unit because of the unity of its highest form, and is related to all of them by accident, and it would be better to call them ‘unified’ rather than a ‘unit.’

5. Composition among several actual existents which are on one plane horizontally and none of which is a form higher than the others, even if some kind of continuity and connection exists among them, such as the composition of the parts of a clock and other machines, which is called ‘mechanical composition.’ Under this assumption, the composed collection cannot be considered as a ‘unit’ or even ‘unified’ from a philosophical point of view; rather it must be construed as multiple existents, and as possessing a conventional (i‘tibari) unity.

6. Composition among several disjoint existents which are viewed as having a kind of unity among them,

such as composition of a corps of an army of several divisions, and the composition of a division of several regiments, and the composition of a regiment of several battalions, and the composition of a battalion of several companies, and so on to a number of soldiers.

Likewise, the composition of the society is into institutions, social classes and groups, and finally the composition of these by individual human beings. From the philosophical point of view, this sort of composition is also based on convention. This sort of composition cannot be considered to have true unity.

Two other sorts of objective composition may be added to the mentioned kinds: chemical composition and organic composition, such as the composition of living existents of several organic and chemical substances.

But from a philosophical point of view, the truth is that these compositions are not a special kind, but according to some philosophers belong to the second type, and according to other philosophers are of the third type. Perhaps the latter view is more correct, especially with regard to living existents.

In conclusion, we should recall that philosophers consider another kind of composition which includes all contingent things, and that is the composition of existence and whatness, which has been discussed. According to this terminology, simple existence is limited to the sacred Divine Essence. But this composition is analytical and mental rather than objective and entified.

It follows that unity may be attributed to material existents in several forms, some of which are true unity, like the continuous unity of [subatomic] particles, and the unity of form which has a simple existence. Some others are conventional unities, like mechanical unity and social unity.

However, regarding the composition of matter and form, if we hold that matter does not have actual existence and that every corporeal existent has but one actual existence, which is the very existence of its form, naturally it will have a real unity.

However, if we hold that matter also has an actual existence, and in other words if we hold that 'prime matter' is not to be accepted as a potential existent, then we must consider each of them to have a specific existence, and the collection of them would be called 'united' rather than a 'unit.'

Also if we believe in vertical and superimposed forms we must consider the collection of them 'plural,' and it is only because of the unity of the highest form that we can regard all of them as a unit by accident, as we regard the collection of the human spirit and body as one existent, while in reality its unity is due to the unity of the spirit.

The Unity of the World

The unity which has been established until now for each entified existent by no means negates the

plurality of the collection of them. However, another unity for the whole world may be proposed which negates its plurality and multiplicity, as it is well known that philosophers consider the world as a 'unit.' However this opinion can be interpreted in several ways.

1. [The first interpretation is] the view that the unity of the world is the continuous unity of the natural world, as philosophers have proposed in discussions of natural philosophy under the heading 'the impossibility of a vacuum,' and with various explanations they have tried to prove that between two natural existents a pure vacuum is impossible, and that in places where it is imagined that there is no existent, in reality there exist rarefied subtle bodies which are capable of being perceived by the senses. On this basis it has been argued that if two or several natural worlds are supposed, if they were connected and attached to one another they would have a continuos unity, and they would compose a single world. If among them a true vacuum were supposed, such that it would completely separate and isolate them from one another, this would refute the arguments against the existence of a vacuum.

2. [The second interpretation is] the view that it is the unity of the system of the natural world, meaning that natural existents are always effecting and being effected by one another, acting and reacting, and no natural existent can be found which neither effects other natural existents nor is effected by them. By their own activities contemporaneous existents prepare the ground for the appearance of later existents, and they themselves appear as a result of the activities of previous existents.

Therefore, the entire natural world is ruled by these relations of material cause and effect, and hence, it can be considered to have a single system. But it is clear that this unity is in reality an attribute of the system which does not have a entified existence independent of the innumerable existents of the world. On this basis, one cannot prove the true unity of the natural world.

3. [The third interpretation is] the view that unity of the world is in the shadow of the unity of a form such that all of the parts of the world are united under its umbrella, just as the parts of a plant or an animal are united under the shadow of the unity of their own substantial forms.

The single form which can be supposed for the whole world so that it also includes living existents such as man and animals, unavoidably will have another spirit which can be called the universal soul or the spirit of the world.

Some philosophers have gone even further to include nonmaterial beings and all but God, and in this way they have regarded the First Intellect or the most perfect contingent existent as a form for all that is below it.

Likewise, many of the gnostics ('urafa) have called the world the 'Cosmic Man.' However, thus far we have not encountered a proof of this matter, and particularly, to call a perfectly nonmaterial existent, such as the First Intellect, the form of the world is not devoid of loose talk.

In any case, this assumption also does not mean the negation of the real multiplicity of the parts of the

world, for this unity, in reality, is an attribute of that very transcendental form of the world, and is only accidentally attributed to the whole world, as was said with regard to the unity of the spirit and the body.

It should not remain unsaid that the acceptance of this unity of the world requires acceptance of the third mentioned kind of composition, while the acceptance of that type of composition does not require the acceptance of such unity.

Lesson 30: The Levels of Existence

Positions on the Unity and Plurality of Being

We know that the individual unity of every entified existent is not contrary to the real plurality of all existents. Likewise, the continuous unity of the material world is not contrary to the plurality of material existents, a plurality which is obtained in the shadow of the multiplicity of different forms. We also know that the unity of the order of the world does not mean its real unity.

However, the individual unity of the world, taken to be a living existent having a spirit, cannot be established, and on the assumption that it could be established, it would be an accidental unity. Any way, the subject of unity in the three mentioned suppositions pertains to the natural world, or at most, to the world of contingent beings. The question now is whether or not a unity can be proven for all being, including the sacred Divine Essence.

In this regard, four positions may be indicated:

1. The position of the sufis, who consider real existence to be limited to the sacred Divine Essence, and they consider all other existents to have a metaphorical existence. This position is known a 'wahdat-e wujud wa mawjud' (the unity of existence and existent). This position appears to be contrary to what is obvious and [given by] consciousness. However, it is possible to give this position some sort of interpretation, according to which it can be taken as a form of another position, the fourth position, to be mentioned below.

2. The position of Dawwani, which considers [unity] to be demanded by the 'divine temperament,' which is known as 'wahdat-e wujud wa kathrat-e mawjud' (the unity of existence and the plurality of existents). According to this position, true existence is specific to God, the Exalted, while 'true existent' also includes creatures, but in the sense of 'being related to true existence,' not in the sense of 'having true existence.'

Likewise, some [morphological] respectivals also convey this meaning, for example, tamir, which is

derived from tamr (date), which means date-seller and is related to dates, and the expression mushammas, which means something upon which the light of the sun shines, derives its meaning from shams, the sun, and the relation to the sun here is obvious.

This position is also unacceptable, for despite the fact that the words tamir and mushammas may be related to date selling and sunshine, this position implies that the expression 'mawjud' has two different meanings, involving a kind of ambiguity. However, there is no ambiguity with regard to wujud; so, it is also unacceptable with regard to mawjud. Moreover, the position mentioned is based on the fundamentality of whatness with regard to the Creator, which is incorrect, as became clear in Lesson Twenty-Seven.

3. The third position is related to the peripatetics, and is known as the 'plurality of existence and of existent.' According to this position, the plurality of existents is undeniable, and necessarily each of them will have its own specific existence, and since existence is a simple reality, so, every existence will be completely distinct (bi tamam-e dhat) from every other existence.

The following argument can be given for this position: one of these cases has to be true of existences: [i] all of them are real unitary individuals; such as individuals of a single kind, [ii] they are of various kinds of a single genus, such as the participation of various species of animals in the genus animal; [iii] none of them have any essential aspect in common, and are completely distinct. This third alternative corresponds to the third position [mentioned above] which is currently under consideration, and with the refutation of the other two alternatives, it would be established.

However, the invalidity of the second position is clear, for it implies that the reality of existence is composed of a common aspect and a distinguishing aspect that is, composed of genus and difference and it does not correspond to the simplicity of the reality of existence, and this goes back to the fact that existence is really itself that common aspect, and by the addition of something else to it, it takes various forms of species. But in the world of being, nothing can be found other than existence which could be added to it as an entified distinguishing aspect.

However, the first alternative implies that existence, like natural universals, takes the form of different individuals with the addition of individuating accidents. But the question may be repeated regarding these accidents, for they are also existents, and according to our assumption all existents possess a unitary reality, so how, on the one hand, can any difference appear between accidents and that which possesses them, and among accidents themselves, on the other hand, so that with such differences there should be different individual existents?

In other words, if it is supposed that there is something in common among entified existents, this will either be a complete sharing, meaning that existence has a specific whatness, and has multiple individuals, or it will be a partial sharing, which implies that existence has a generic whatness, and has different species.

Both assumptions are invalid. Hence there is no other option but to admit that entified existences are completely distinct. But this argument is not perfect, because the threefold alternative we assumed regarding the entified reality of existence, were taken from the principles governing whatness.

An effort was made to establish the essential distinction among existences, like the distinction among simple whatnesses, by denying that existence is composed of genus and difference, and likewise by denying that it is composed of specific nature and individuating accidents. Nevertheless, what is common among existences in the reality of existence is not a common genus or species, nor is their distinction of the sort that distinguishes simple species.

It follows that such an argument is unable to refute the co-participation of entified existences in any form other than that of having a common species or genus. It will soon become clear that another kind of unity and participation can be established for entified realities.

4. The fourth position is one which Sadr al-Muta'allihin has ascribed to the ancient Iranian sages, and is one which he himself has accepted, and has tried to explain and establish. It has become known as 'unity in plurality itself.' According to this view, entified realities of existence both have unity and commonness with one another and also have differences and distinctions.

However that which is held in common and that which distinguishes them is not of such a kind as to cause composition in entified existence or to make it analyzable into genus and difference. Their differences result from weakness and intensity, like the difference between intense light and weak light, where the weakness and intensity here is nothing other than the light. Intense light is nothing but light.

Weak light is also nothing but light. At the same time, they differ with respect to their weakness and intensity. But this difference does not interfere with the simplicity of the reality of light which is common among all of them. In other words: entified existences have graduated differences, and that which distinguishes them results from that which they have in common.

Of course, the analogy between levels of existence and levels of light is only to make it easier for the mind to understand, otherwise material light is not a simple reality (although most of the ancient philosophers imagined that it was a simple accident). On the other hand, existence has a special sort of gradualness, contrary to the gradualness of light which is a more general sort of gradualness. The difference between the two was clarified in Lesson Twenty- Eight.

However, this position may be interpreted in two ways: first, there is the difference in the level of existence between one existence and another existence, which is considered to obtain among individuals of one whatness or of several whatnesses of the same horizontal level; second, there is the difference in levels which is considered to obtain exclusively between real causes and their effects.

Since all existents are directly or indirectly the effects of God, the Exalted, it follows that the world of being is composed of an absolutely independent existence and innumerable dependent relative

existences, such that each cause is relatively independent in relation to its effect, and in this respect is more complete and possesses a higher level of existence, even if effects on the same horizontal level, which have no relations of cause and effect among each other, do not have such a gradualness, and from one point of view, they are reckoned to be completely distinct (bi tamam-e dhat).

However, the first interpretation is quite far-fetched and is unacceptable, even though it is apparently indicated in some places by Sadr al-Muta'allihin and his followers.

Let it not remain unsaid that he interpreted the words of the gnostics ('urafa') and sufi researchers to have this same meaning, and considered what they meant by 'true [or literal] existent and existence' (mawjud wa wujud-e haqiqi) to be the absolute, independent existent and existence, and he interpreted what they meant by 'figurative existent and existence' (mawjud wa wujud-e majazi) to be dependent and relative existent and existence.

The First Argument for Graduated Levels of Existence

Arguments can be given of two sorts for the graduated levels of existence, one of which corresponds to the first interpretation [mentioned above] and the other of which corresponds to the second interpretation. The first argument is that of Sadr al-Muta'allihin and his followers which has been discussed in this lesson; the second is obtained from their explanations of cause and effect.

The first argument, in reality, is about the establishment of that which is entifiedly in common among objective realities. This may be explained as meaning that the fourth position may be divided into two cases: one is that multiplicity is attributed to objective existences and unavoidably these existences have distinctions among them; the other case is that that which distinguishes among them is not incompatible with that which is in common among them, and all of them, in their very multiplicity, are in possession of that which they have in common, which is neither inconsistent with their simplicity nor with their multiplicity.

Since the first case is self-evident and undeniable, they have directed their efforts to proving the second case.

This argument is that from all entified realities a single concept, which is that very concept of existence, may be abstracted. The abstraction of this single concept from multiple realities is reason that there is a entified [reality] in common among them which is the source of the abstraction of the single concept. If there were not any unitary aspect among objective existences such a single concept would not be abstracted.

This argument is based on two premises: one is that the concept of existence is a single univocal concept. This was proven in Lesson Twenty-Two.

The other premise is that the abstraction of a single concept from multiple things shows that there is a

single common aspect among them. The reason for this is that if a single aspect were not necessary for the abstraction of a single concept this would imply that its abstraction would be without any criterion, and then any concept could be abstracted from anything, while the invalidity of this is clear.

In this way it is to be concluded that entified existences possess something objective in common. Then another premise is added, that entified existence is simple and has a single entified aspect. It cannot be considered to be composed of two distinct aspects. So, the distinctive aspect of entified existences will not be incompatible with the common aspect of unity among them, that is, the difference among the existences will be graduated signifying the different levels of a single reality.

However, this argument appears to be controvertible, for, as was indicated in Lesson Twenty–One, the unity and multiplicity of secondary intelligibles is not a decisive reason for the unity and multiplicity of entified objective aspects; rather, it corresponds to the unity and multiplicity of viewpoints which the intellect has in abstracting these kinds of concepts.

Often the intellect abstracts numerous concepts from a single simple reality, as of the sacred Divine Essence, from which it abstracts the concepts of existence, knowledge, power and life, while no kind of multiplicity or plurality of entified aspects is conceivable for that lofty station. And how often the intellect looks at different realities from a single viewpoint and abstracts from all of them a single concept, as the concept of unity is abstracted from various objective realities.

The concepts of existence and existent are of the same sort, as is the abstraction of the concept of accident from the nine categories; and the abstraction of the whatish concepts, category and highest genus from all the ten categories, although Sadr al–Muta'allihin believed that they had nothing essentially in common among them.

Therefore, the unity of such concepts merely shows the unity of the viewpoint the intellect has in abstracting them, not the unity of the entified aspects in common among them. If there is such an aspect, it should be proved in some other way.

The Second Argument for Graduated Levels of Existence

The second argument is composed of premises which are proved in the section on cause and effect, and perhaps this has prevented it from being discussed in this context [pertaining to the grades of existence]. However, due to its importance we shall mention these premises as something given, while they will be proven in their own proper place.

The first premise is that there is a cause and effect relation among existents, and there is no existent which falls outside of the chain of causes and effects. Of course, only 'being a cause' ('illiyyah; lit., 'causehood') is attributed to the existent at the head of the chain, and only 'being an effect' (ma'luliyyah; lit., 'effecthood') is attributed to the existent at the end of the chain. In any case, no existent lacks both

the relation neither of being a cause nor of being an effect to any other existent, such that it is neither a cause nor an effect of something.

The second premise is that the entified existence of an effect is not independent of the existence of its creating cause. It is not true that each of them possesses an independent existence, and that they are joined by means of a relation external to their existences; rather, the existence of an effect has no sort of independence whatsoever from its creating cause. In other words, it is the very relation and dependence on its cause, not something independent which has a relation with its cause, as is observed in the relation between an act of will and the soul.

This topic is the noblest of all philosophical topics, and it has been established by the late Sadr al-Muta'allihin. By means of it he has opened a way to the solution of many philosophical perplexities. Truly, it must be considered one of the most eminent and exquisite fruits of Islamic philosophy.

From the addition of these two premises the conclusion is obtained that the existence of all effects in relation to their creating cause, and ultimately to the sacred divine Being, which is the source of emanation of all existences other than Itself, is that very dependence. All creatures are in reality manifestations of the Divine existence.

In accordance with their own levels they possess intensity and weaknesses, priority and posteriority, and some of them are relatively independent of others; but absolute independence is reserved for the sacred Divine Essence.

Thus, the whole of being is composed of a chain of entified existences, in which the 'strength' (qiwam) of each link, with regard to its level of existence in relation to it, is more limited and weaker than that of the link above.

This same weakness and limitation is the criterion for being an effect. [The chain continues upward] until it reaches the source of being which is of unlimited intensity of existence and which encompasses all the levels of contingency, and sustains the existence of all of them. There is no existent which is independent and without need of It in any aspect or facet, but rather they are all poor, needy and dependent on Him.

By this existential relation is meant a special sort of unity which negates the independence of every existent except the Holy Divine Existence, and the concept of which only applies to entified existence and is naturally based upon the fundamentality of existence.

When one considers independent being, it will have no other instance than the infinite Divine Being. For this reason independent being must be considered unitary, and this is a unity which is not susceptible to multiplicity. For this reason it is called 'true unity' (wahdat-e haqqah).

When one turns one's attention to the levels of existence and its manifestations, multiplicity is attributed

to them; however, at the same time a kind of unity must be admitted among them. For since the effect is not the cause, it cannot be considered a second to it, but rather must be considered as being sustained by the cause, and an aspect from among the aspects of the cause and a manifestation among its manifestations.

By their 'union' (ittihad) is meant that in the context of its own being, one has no independence in relation to the other, although the expression 'union' (ittihad) is vague and inadequate, and the proper meaning of it is not commonly discerned, and this leads to misunderstandings.

It is obvious without further comment that this exposition does not negate the multiplicity of existences at the same level in some links of the chain, such as the natural universe, and this does not require that individuals of one or several whatnesses of the same degree differ in their grades [of being]; rather the differences among them are to be considered distinctions with the entirety of their simple existences.

Part 4: Causality

Lesson 31: Cause and Effect
Lesson 32: The Principle of Causation
Lesson 33: The Causal Relation
Lesson 34: The Causal Relation among Material Things
Lesson 35: The Dependence of the Effect on the Cause
Lesson 36: The Relations of Cause and Effect
Lesson 37: The Principles of Cause and Effect
Lesson 38: The Efficient Cause
Lesson 39: The Final Cause
Lesson 40: The Purposefulness of the Cosmos

Lesson 31: Cause and Effect

Introduction

With the acceptance of a multiplicity of existents, the question arises as to whether or not different existents have any relation to each other, and whether or not the existence of some of them depends on the existence of others. If there is such a relation, how many kinds of dependence are there? What are

the principles and characteristics of each of them?

However, if someone does not accept the real multiplicity of existents as is the apparent view of some, then there is no room for discussion about existential relations among various existents, and likewise there would be no call for discussion of the various kinds of existence and existents.

In the previous discussion, we indicated that the proof of a special gradation in existence depends upon a principle which must be established in the discussion of cause and effect. Now the time has arrived for us to pay heed to the problems of cause and effect and to establish the mentioned principles. However, before delving into these matters some explanation must be given about the concepts of cause and effect and how the mind becomes acquainted with them.

The Concepts of Cause and Effect

In philosophical terminology, the word 'cause' is used in a general and in a.specific sense. The general concept of cause is applied to an existent upon which the realization of another existent depends, even if it is not sufficient for this realization. The specific concept is applied to an existent which is sufficient for the realization of another existent.

In other words, in its general sense, a cause is an existent without which realization of another existent is impossible. In its specific sense, a cause is an existent whose existence requires the realization of another existent.

It is noteworthy that the first sense is more general than the second, because it includes conditions and prerequisites and other incomplete causes, unlike the second sense. The explanation of complete and incomplete causes, as well as other kinds of causes, will follow. We should take note of the point that a dependent existent (i.e. an effect) is called an effect solely with respect to its aspect of dependence and in relation to the existent upon which it is dependent, not with respect to any other aspect nor in relation to any other existent.

Likewise, something is called a cause in virtue of that very aspect in which another existent depends upon it and in relation to that very existent, not with respect to any aspect or any existent.

For example, heat is an effect with respect to the aspect of its dependence on fire, and in relation to its own cause, not with respect to other aspects. And fire is called a cause with respect to the aspect in which it is a source of heat and in relation to that very heat which it produces, not with respect to another aspect.

Therefore, there is no incompatibility between a certain existent's being a cause in relation to one thing and an effect in relation to something else. And there is even no incompatibility between heat being the effect of a specific fire and being the cause of the occurrence of another fire. Likewise, there is no incompatibility between an existent's having other aspects to be explained in terms of other concepts in

addition to the aspects of cause or effect.

For example, in addition to the aspect of causality, fire possesses other aspects, which are referred to by means of the concepts of substance, body, changeable, etc., none of which is the same as its aspect of causality.

The Ways in which the Mind becomes acquainted with these Concepts

With the explanations which has been given of cause and effect it has become clear that these concepts are not whatish concepts or primary intelligibles, and it is not true that in the external world we have an existent whose whatness is being a cause or effect.

Likewise, the above concepts are not secondary logical intelligibles, for they become attributes of entified existents, and in technical terms, their characterization (ittisaf) is external. Hence, these concepts are secondary philosophical intelligibles, and the best proof of this is that in order to abstract these concepts one must compare two existents and take into consideration the aspect of the dependence of one of them on the other.

Until this is done, these concepts will not be abstracted. Thus, if one sees fire thousands of times but does not compare it with the heat it produces, and does not consider the relation between them, he will be unable to relate the concept of cause to fire and the concept of effect to heat.

Now the question arises as to how our minds basically become acquainted with these concepts and discover such a relation among existents.

Many Western philosophers have imagined that the concepts of cause and effect are obtained by observing the regular simultaneity or succession of two phenomena, that is, when we see that fire and heat always occur together or successively, we abstract the concepts of cause and effect from them, and in truth the content of these two concepts is nothing more than the regular simultaneity or succession of the two phenomena.

However, this speculation is incorrect, because in many cases two phenomena regularly occur together or successively while neither is to be counted as the cause of the other. For example, the light and heat of an electric lamp always appear together, and day and night always occur successively, but neither of them is the cause of the appearance of the other.[1]

It may be said that when a phenomenon is subjected to repeated experiments, and it is seen that it does not occur without another existent, in this way the concepts of cause and effect are abstracted from them. However, we know that prior to beginning an experiment, experimenters believe that there is a causal relation among phenomena, and their purpose for performing the experiment is to discover

specific causes and effects, and to find out what is the cause of the appearance of some phenomenon.

So, the question arises as to how, prior to performing the experiment, they found out about the concepts of cause and effect. How did they know that such a relation exists among existents, so as to set out to discover a specific relation of cause and effect?

It seems that man discovers this relation for the first time within himself through presentational knowledge. For example, mental actions, decisions, and the acquisition of concepts and mental images are considered to be cases of things one does oneself, and that their existence depends on one's own existence, while one's own existence does not depend on them. By means of such considerations the concepts of cause and effect are abstracted and then generalized to other existents.

Types of Cause

The dependence of one existent upon another, takes various forms. For example, the appearance of a chair, on the one hand, is dependent on the wood of which it is made, while on the other hand, it depends on the carpenter who makes it, on the knowledge and skill of the carpenter, and on his motivation for making it.

Corresponding to these, various kinds of cause may be distinguished. Since the principles of all causes are not the same, it is necessary to mention the types of cause and the terminology appropriate to them before discussing the laws of causality and the principles of cause and effect, so that when we turn to related problems mistakes are not made.

Cause in its general sense, that is, an existent upon which another existent is somehow dependent, may be classified in various ways, of which the following are the most important:

Complete and Incomplete Causes: A cause may either be such that it is sufficient for the realization of the effect, or such that it is not sufficient for the realization of the effect even though that effect cannot be realized without it. The former sort of cause is called a 'complete cause' and the existence of its effect depends on nothing other than it. In other words, given the existence of the complete cause, the existence of its effect is necessary. The latter sort of cause is called an 'incomplete cause' and one or more things must be added to it before its effect becomes necessary.

Simple and Compound Causes: From another point of view, causes can be divided into the simple and the compound. Simple causes are those such as things which are completely immaterial, such as God the Exalted, and intelligible substances (whose existence must be proven at the appropriate place). Compound causes are those as material causes which have different parts.

Immediate and Mediate Causes: From another point of view, causes can be divided into the immediate and the mediate. For example, the influence of a man on the movement of his own hand may be considered to be immediate, while his influence on the movement of the pen in his hand may be

considered through one intermediary, and his influence on his writing as being through two intermediaries, and on the impressions produced in the mind of the reader as through several intermediaries.

Irreplaceable and Replaceable Causes: Sometimes the cause of the appearance of an effect is the existence of a definite existent, and the supposed effect cannot come into existence save by means of that specific cause itself. In this case the above mentioned cause is called an irreplaceable cause.

Sometimes an effect may be brought into existence by one of several interchangeable things, so that the existence of one of them necessitates its appearance, such as heat, which sometimes occurs as a result of the electric current in a wire, sometimes as the result of motion, and sometimes as a result of a chemical reaction, and in this case it is called a replaceable cause.

Internal and External Causes: Sometimes the cause is such that its effect is united with it and remains interior to the existence of the effect, such as the elements which remain interior to the existence of a plant or an animal. This is called an interior cause. Sometimes the cause will be external to the existence of its effect, such as the existence of a craftsman who is external to the existence of his handiwork. This is called an external cause.

Real and Preparatory Causes: Sometimes the concept of cause is applied to.an existent upon which the existence of an effect is really dependent, so that the separation of the effect from it is impossible, such as the causality of the self for the will and mental forms which cannot be realized or maintained apart from the self. These are called real causes.

Sometimes the concept of cause is applied to an existent which prepares the way for the appearance of its effect, although the existence of the effect does not have a real and inseparable dependence on it, as in the case of the relation of a father to his son. This is called the preparatory cause or preliminary (mu'idd).

Exigent Causes and Conditions: Sometimes the appearance of an effect as the result of a cause depends on the existence of a specific state and quality, in which case the cause itself is called an exigent, and the necessary state and quality are called conditions. Sometimes a thing is called a condition when it brings about the above mentioned state, as the non-being of an obstacle to an effect is called an absence condition (shart- e 'adami).

Conditions are also divided into two groups: one is the condition of the agency of the agent, that is, something without which the agent is unable to perform his action, and in fact, it perfects his agency, such as the influence of knowledge on the voluntary actions of man. The other is the condition of the capability of the recipient, that is, something which must be realized in matter in order to receive a new perfection from the agent, such as the need for a fetus to satisfy some conditions in order to receive a spirit.

Material, Formal, Efficient and Final Causes: Another famous categorization which is based on induction, divides causes into four groups: One is the material or elemental cause, which is the ground for the appearance of the effect and remains interior to it, such as the elements composing a plant.

The second is the formal cause, which means the form and activity which appears in the matter, and which becomes the source of the new effects in it, such as the vegetative form. These two types of cause are internal causes, and together they compose the existence of the effect. The third type is the efficient cause (or active cause) by means of which the effect is brought about, such as someone who creates a form in matter.

The fourth type of cause is the final cause, which is the motivation of the agent for the performance of the action, such as the aim which a person takes into consideration for his own voluntary actions and performs the action for the purpose of achieving that aim. These two last types of cause are considered external causes.

It is obvious that the material cause and the formal cause are particular to material effects, composed of matter and form, and it is fundamentally problematic to apply [the concept of] cause to them.

It should be noted that the efficient cause may be described by means of two terms: one is the natural agent, which in the natural sciences is known as the efficient cause, and what is meant by it is the source of motion and.change in bodies. And another is the divine agent, which is to be discussed under theology. What is meant by it is an existent which brings the effect into existence and gives it being.

The only example of it is to be found among nonmaterial objects, because natural functions are only the source of motion and change in things, and there is no natural existent which brings another existent from nothingness into being.

Among the divine creative agents, there is an agent which itself is in no need of a creator, which is called the True Agent (Fa'il-e Haqq), and the example of it is confined to the sacred divine essence.

Another point which must be mentioned at the end of this lesson is that all of the divisions of cause with the exception of the last are rational ('aqli) and yield mutually exclusive pairs of terms, one positive and one negative. All of them may be stated as 'mutually exclusive disjunctions' (qadhiyyah munfasilah haqiqiyyah).2 However, the exegent and condition are really two special types of incomplete cause, and should not be considered as independent types of cause.

1. In this regard there will be a further explanation in Lesson Thirty-Five

2. A qa□iyyah haqiqiyyah (literally, a verity proposition) is to be contrasted with a qa□iyyah kharijiyyah (an external proposition). The latter depends for its truth on the existence of the referent of its subject in the external world while the former does not so depend. A qa□iyyah munfasilah is a disjunctive proposition, so a qa□iyyah munfasilah haqiqiyyah is a disjunctive proposition whose truth is independent of conditions in the external world, so that it becomes necessary that one or the other of its disjuncts be true.

Lesson 32: The Principle of Causation

The Importance of the Principle of Causation

As was explained earlier,[1] the discovery of causal relations among phenomena forms the axis of all scientific efforts, and the principle of causality, as a universal and general principle, is a pillar of all sciences which deal with the laws of real objects.

On the other hand, every scientific law owes its universality and definiteness to the rational and philosophical laws of causation and without them no universal and definite law of any science could be established. This is one of the most important ways in which science is in need of philosophy.

Some of those who deny rationalism and rational principles independent of experience, or who basically do not believe that philosophical and metaphysical problems have any scientific or definitive value, try to prove the validity of the principle of causality by way of experience.

However, as has been repeatedly indicated, these sorts of efforts are useless and sterile. In order to establish the real existence of a entified thing outside the self one must rely upon the principle of causation, and without it there is no way to establish entified realities, and there will always exist room for doubt as to whether there exist realities beyond perceptions and mental images which are subjected to experience.

Furthermore, the establishment of a correspondence between perceptions and external things (after accepting them), requires subsidiary laws of causation, and as long as these laws have not been established, there will be room for doubt as to whether our mental phenomena and perceptions correspond to things in the external world, so that we may come to know of external realities by means of these laws.

Finally, if there is doubt about the laws of causation, then one cannot establish the universality and definiteness of the results of experience, and the attempt to establish the laws of causation by means of experience involves circular reasoning, that is, the universality of the results of experience is based on the laws of causation, and this presupposes that we wish to establish these laws by means of generalization upon the results of experience and their universality.

In other words, the use of experience is possible only in case the existence of things as subjects of experience is established and the results of experience are also definitely known. And both of these are dependent upon the acceptance of the principle of causality, before setting out to experiment, for if an experimenter does not believe in the principle of causality, and he seeks to establish this by means of an experiment, he will not be able to ascertain the real existence of things experimented, for it is in the light of this principle that we ascertain the existence of a cause (an external thing) by means of the existence

of its effect (a perceptual phenomenon), as was explained in Lesson Twenty– Three.

Furthermore, unless it is established with the help of the laws of causation that the causes of various changing perceptual phenomena indicating different dimensions and shapes correspond to material things, one will not be able to know definitely and certainly the attributes and characteristics of the objects of experience, so that one may be able to make judgments about the results of experiences related to them.

Moreover, the utmost that can be ascertained through sense experience are merely simultaneity or the regular succession of two phenomena in the realm of experience. However, we know that simultaneity or the succession of phenomena is more general than causality, and by means of them the causal relation cannot be established.

Finally, the problem remains that no matter how many times a sense experience is repeated, it cannot refute the possibility of an uncaused effect; that is, there will always remain the possibility that in the case of something not yet experienced the effect will occur without the cause, or while the cause exists, its effect does not occur, i.e., sense experience is insufficient to establish the universal and exigent relation between two phenomena, let alone establish the universal laws of causality regarding all causes and effects.

Hence, someone like Hume, who considers causality to amount to the simultaneity or succession of two phenomena, will be unable to escape from such doubts and misgivings, and for this reason this sort of philosophical problem has been declared to be unsolvable. Likewise, those who have inclinations toward positivism and who restrict themselves to the input of the senses cannot establish any universal and definite laws in any of the sciences.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide further explanation of the purport of the principle of causality, its value and its validity.

The Purport of the Principle of Causation

By the principle of causation is meant those propositions which denote the need of the effect for a cause, and they imply that an effect will not occur without a cause. This matter can be expounded as a 'verity proposition' (qadhiyyah haqiqiyyah) in the following form: Every effect needs a cause.

The purport of this is that whenever an effect occurs in the external world, it will be in need of a cause, and there is no existent which can be characterized as an effect and which has come into existence without a cause. So, the existence of an effect indicates that it has been brought into existence by a cause.

This is an analytic proposition, and the concept of its predicate is obtained from the concept of its subject, for the concept of being an effect, as has been explained, consists in being an existent whose

existence is dependent upon another existent of which it is in need. Hence, the concept of the subject (effect) includes the meaning of need and dependency on a cause which constitutes the predicate of the above-mentioned proposition.

Thus, it is one of the primary self- evident propositions (badihiyyat awwaliyyah) and has no need for any sort of reason or proof, and merely imagining the subject and predicate is sufficient for affirming this proposition.

However, this proposition does not denote the existence of an effect in the external world, and on the basis of it one cannot establish that in the world of being there exists an existent which is in need of a cause, for a verity proposition (qadhiyyah haqiqiyyah) is considered to be a conditional proposition, and by itself it is not capable of establishing the existence of its subject in the external world, and it denotes no more than that if an existent with the characteristic of being an effect occurs, then it cannot but have a cause.

This principle can be presented in another way, such that it denotes the existence of an instance of the subject in the external world, as in the following form: Effects which exist in the external world are in need of causes.

This can also be considered to be a self-evident proposition, for it may be analyzed into two propositions, the first of which is the same as that mentioned above, and which is a primary self-evident proposition, and another proposition, which denotes the existence of an effect in the external world and which can be obtained by means of presentational knowledge of internal effects, that is to say, it is a self-evident proposition acquired through consciousness.

However, this proposition is unable to determine which are the instances of being an effect, and it merely denotes that there are existents in the external world which are termed 'effects' and that they are in need of causes. But which of the existents in the external world are to be termed and qualified this way, is not to be obtained from this proposition.

In any case, the recognition of instances of causes and effects is not self- evident, except for those comprehended through knowledge by presence. The others require proof. First, the characteristics of cause and effect should be determined, and with the application of these to existents in the external world the instances of cause and effect may be recognized.

Some of the Western philosophers who have not properly understood the purport of the principle of causation have imagined that its purport is that every existent is in need of a cause. Thus, according to their own speculations they have objected to the proof of the existence of God, the Exalted, based on the principle of causality.

They have objected that according to the above mentioned principle, God should also have a creator! They have overlooked the fact that the subject of the principle of causation is not simply 'existent,' but is

‘an existent effect,’ and since God, the Exalted, is not an effect, He is in no need of a cause or creator.

The Criterion of the Need for a Cause

Islamic philosophers have expounded a topic under the rubric ‘the criterion of the need for a cause,’ the conclusion of which is the determination of the subject of the principle of causality, the outcome of which is as follows.

If the subject of this proposition were simply ‘existent,’ this would mean that an existent in so far as it is an existent is in need of a cause, and this would imply that every existent needs a cause. However, not only is this not self-evident, but there is no reason for it, and moreover, we have a proof against it, for the proofs for the existence of God, the Exalted, signify that there also exists an existent which is not in need of a cause. So, the subject of the above mentioned proposition must be qualified. Now we must see what this qualification is.

The mutakalimin (Muslim scholastic theologians) have imagined that the qualification is ‘huduth’ (the property of having come into existence), that is, every existent which is hadith, and which at one time did not exist and afterward came into existence, will be in need of a cause.

So, being qadim (eternal) is considered to be confined to God, the Exalted. They argued that if an existent had existed from eternity (azali) and had no previous condition of nothingness, then it would not be in need of another existent to bring it into existence.

Contrary to them, the philosophers believed that the qualification for the subject of the noted proposition is contingency (imkan), that is, every existent which essentially has the possibility of non-being, such that the supposition of its non-being is not impossible, is in need of a cause. The shortness of length of its life will not make it needless of a cause, rather the longer its life the more it will be in need of a cause, and if it is supposed that its life is infinite, then its need for a cause will also be infinite. Thus, it is not intellectually impossible for an existent which is an effect to be eternal.

However, it is to be noted that the contingency which serves to qualify the subject and is the criterion for needing a cause is the attribute of a whatness. According to the philosophers, it is the whatness which in and of itself requires no relation to existence or nothingness. In other words, its relation to existence and nothingness is equal, and there must be something else to bring it out of the state of equilibrium. This thing is the cause. For this reason, the criterion for the need for a cause is regarded to be essential contingency.

However, this position is homogeneous with the fundamentality of whatness, and one who accepts the fundamentality of existence would do better to rest his philosophical discussions on existence. This is why Sadr al-Muta’allihin (Mulla Sadra) claimed that the criterion of the need of an effect for a cause is the mode of its existence; in other words the criterion for the need of some existents for a self-sufficient

and needless existence is their ontological poverty and innate dependence.

So, the subject of the above mentioned proposition will be 'impoverished existent' (mawjud–e faqir) or 'dependent existent.' When we take into consideration the levels of gradation of existence, in which each weaker level is dependent on a stronger level, we may take the subject of the proposition to be 'the weak existent' and the criterion of the need for a cause to be the weakness of the level of existence.

By attending to the exposition of Sadr al–Muta'allihin it is found, firstly, that the causal relation is to be sought in either the existence of the cause or the existence of the effect rather than in their whatnesses. This is a corollary of the position of the fundamentality of existence. This is contrary to the position of one who imagines that the cause brings about the whatness of the effect, or that the cause attributes existence to the whatness of the effect, or in technical terms, the making (ja'l) is related to whatness or to the attribution of whatness to existence.

Both of these positions are based on the fundamentality of whatness, and with the invalidity of this position, there is no place for such views.

Secondly, being an effect and the dependency of an effect are essential to its existence. The dependent existence will never be independent and without need of a cause. In other words, the existence of the effect is itself the very dependence on and relation to the cause which provides being. On this basis entified existence may be divided into two parts: the independent and the relational. This is the exquisite subject which we mentioned previously, and it is one of the most valuable fruits of the transcendent philosophy (of Mulla Sadra).

This requires further explanation.

1. See Lesson Nine.

Lesson 33: The Causal Relation

The Reality of the Causal Relation

When it is said that "the cause provides the effect with existence," the mind associates this with someone who gives something to another who receives it. In this process there are three essences and two actions (fi'l).

In other words five existents are assumed: one is the essence of the cause which is the provider of existence, another essence is the effect which is the receiver of the existence, the third is that very existence which is obtained by the effect from the cause, the fourth is the action of giving which is

related to the cause, and the fifth is the action of receiving which is ascribed to the effect.

In truth, in the external world there is nothing but the entity of the cause and the entity of the effect. Moreover, to be precise, it cannot be said that the cause provides existence for the whatness, for whatnesses are respectival (i'tibari) and prior to the occurrence of the effect, its whatness does not have existence even in a figurative or accidental sense.

Likewise the concepts of giving and receiving are nothing more than mental images, and if giving existence, or creating, were a real entified thing, then it would be yet another effect and it would depend on another causal relation between the action and its agent, and another giving [of existence] would be established, and so on infinitely.

Also, in the case of an effect which has not yet occurred, there is no receiver to receive anything, and after its occurrence, its receiving of existence from a cause would also be meaningless. Hence, in the case of the creation of an effect, there is no real entified existence other than the existence of the cause and the existence of the effect.

Now, the following question may be posed. What form does the causal relation take between the existence of the cause and the existence of the effect? After the occurrence of the effect, or simultaneous with it, is there something else by the name of the cause–effect relation? Or does such a thing exist prior to its occurrence? Or is it fundamentally a mere mental concept which never has an instance in the external world? Someone who imagines that the reality of causation consists in the succession or simultaneity of two phenomena will consider causality to be a mental concept.

He will hold that there are no instances of causality except for the relation (idhafah) of simultaneity or immediate succession (a relation which is considered to be one of the nine categories of accidents).

However, there are problems with the interpretation of causality in terms of the relation of simultaneity or succession, some of which have been indicated, and to these we should add the following: No relation ever has any entified reality, and therefore, the interpretation of causality as a kind of relation is really a denial of causality as a entified objective relation, such as ventured by Hume and his followers.

Assuming that relations generally or that this particular relation is entified and based on its two terms, there is still no instance of it prior to the existence of the effect, for something which depends on two terms and is parasitic on them cannot occur without the two terms mentioned above.

If it is supposed that the relation comes into existence after or simultaneous with the occurrence of the effect, this implies that the effect in its essence has no relation with the cause, and is connected with it merely by means of an external relation, as if the above mentioned relation were a rope binding them together.

Furthermore, if this relation were a entified thing, this thing would inevitably be an effect, and the

question about the quality of its relation to its cause would be repeated, and there would have to be an infinitude of causal relations!

Hence, none of the mentioned assumptions is correct. In truth, the existence of the effect is a ray radiated by the existence of the cause, as well as the relation itself and its very dependence, and the concept of possession or relation is abstracted from its essence, and in technical terms it is said that the existence of the effect is an illuminative relation (idhafah ishraqiyyah) of the existence of the cause, not a relation to be considered as belonging to one of the categories abstracted by recurring relations between two things.

In this way, existence may be divided into two parts, one relational and one independent. Every effect in relation to its creating cause is relational and dependent. Every cause in relation to the effect it creates is independent, however much it may itself be the effect of another existent, and in relation to that, it will be relational and dependent.

The absolutely independent is a cause which is not the effect of the existence of anything. This is the same topic which was used to establish the specific graduation of existence.

Knowledge of the Causal Relation

The causal relation, as analyzed and studied here, is specific to the creating cause and its effect, and does not include preparatory or material causes. At this point, two questions may be raised, one about how one can know the above- mentioned relation between creative agents and their effects, and the other about how one can prove causal relations among physical things which are preparatory causes and effects.

Earlier it was indicated that man discovers some of the instances of cause and effect within himself by means of knowledge by presence, and when he considers the direct actions of the self, and compares such things as willing and the acquiring of mental concepts with his self, and he finds them to be dependent on the self, he abstracts the concept of cause and applies it to the self and he abstracts the concept of effect and applies this to the actions of the self.

So, he observes, for example, that his willing to do some deed depends upon specific cases of conceptual (tasawwuri) and propositional (tasdiqi) knowledge, and until such cognitions are realized, the act of willing is not produced by the self.

By observing this sort of dependency which exists between knowledge and willing, the concepts of cause and effect may be further expanded so that the concept of effect may be applied to everything which has some sort of dependence upon another. Likewise, the concept of cause is generalized to everything on which something else depends in some manner. In this way, the general concepts of cause and effect take shape.

In other words, the finding of instances of cause and effect disposes the self to abstract universal concepts from them so as to include similar individuals, which is characteristic of universal concepts, as was explained in the discussion of epistemology.

For example, the concept of cause which is abstracted from the self is not in respect of its specific existence, and not in respect of its being itself, but because another existent depends upon it. So, any existent which is like this will be an instance of the concept of cause, whether it is material or immaterial, contingent or necessary.

Likewise, the concept of effect, which is abstracted from willing or any other phenomenon, is not so because it possesses a specific existence or whatness, but rather because it is dependent upon another existent. Hence it is applied to any other thing which has some sort of dependence, whether it is material or immaterial, substance or accident.

Therefore, cognition of one or more instances is sufficient for abstracting a universal concept, but the cognition of a universal concept is not sufficient for recognizing its instances. Hence, in order to know the instances which are not known by means of knowledge by presence, standards and criteria must be found.

Furthermore, the causal relation pertaining to the creating cause which is abstracted from the essence of its effect, and the existence of the effect which is considered to be identical with the illuminative relation (idhafah ishraqiyyah), must be established beyond the self by means of an argument. That is, the question may be raised about how the existence of the self is relational and dependent in relation to another existent. How is it that the existences of the entire world emerged from another existent, and how do we know that it is not independent in itself? Such questions may be repeated regarding preparatory relations. First, how is it to be established that among material existents there are causal relations? Second, how can one establish a relation of dependence between one material phenomenon and another?

Considering the fact that creating causes cannot be found among material things, the knowledge of such causes and such causal relations beyond the realm of presentational knowledge will only be possible by intellectual methods. Empirical methods provide no way toward metaphysics. One cannot expect to be able to know creative causes by means of experimentation, the alteration of conditions, and controlling variables.

Since, moreover, it is not possible to exclude immaterial existents, so that their effects could be known by means of their elimination and inclusion and changing conditions, the only way for the establishment of the rational properties of such causes and effects is through pure rational proofs, and by means of them to determine the instances of each of them. This is contrary to the case of material causes and effects, which can be known to some extent by empirical methods.

In conclusion, there are, on the whole, three ways to knowledge of causal relations: first, through

presentational knowledge for cases in the realm of the self and psychological phenomena; second, through pure rational proofs for cases of supernatural causes; and third, rational proofs based on empirical premises for cases of material causes and effects.

Distinguishing Features of Cause and Effect

The ancient philosophers did not discuss the character of knowledge of cause and effect as an independent subject. The only thing which we have obtained from their expositions is that the first cause, a cause which is not also an effect, has no whatness, contrary to objects which do have whatnesses.

Since a whatness in and of itself has no relation to existence and nothingness, it naturally will need a cause to bring it out of its state of equilibrium. In other words, every existent which has a whatness and from which a whatish concept may be abstracted will be contingent and in need of a cause.

However, this exposition, in addition to being appropriate only for the fundamentality of whatness, is ineffective and fails to resolve our difficulties, for it is only able to establish whether contingents are effects, and it fails to present any standard for the recognition of the causation of some things with respect to others.

However, on the basis of the principles established by Sadr al- Muta'allihin, one can obtain a very clear standard for the recognition of the creative cause and its effect. These principles are: the fundamentality of existence, the relativity of the effect in relation to the creative cause, and the gradation of the planes of existence.

On the basis of these threefold principles each of which has been established in the appropriate place, it follows that every effect is at a weaker level than its creative cause, and its cause, in turn, is at a weaker level than a more perfect existent which is its creative cause, until we reach an existent which has no weakness, failure, deficiency or limitations, and it will be infinitely perfect, so that it will no longer be the effect of something.

Hence, the distinguishing feature of being an effect is the weakness of the level of existence in relation to another existent, and conversely, the distinguishing feature of being a cause is the strength and intensity of the level of existence in relation to an effect, in accordance with which the distinguishing feature of the absolute cause is the infinite intensity and perfection of existence.

Even if we cannot recognize creative causes and effects individually, we can understand that every creative cause is more perfect than its effect, and in relation to its creative cause it is more deficient, and wherever there is weakness and existential limitation, the being of an effect will be established. Since in the natural world there does not exist any infinite existent, all corporeal existents will be effects of the supernatural.

It may be said that what has been obtained from the mentioned principles is that everywhere we have

two existents, one of which is the emanation of the other and is considered to be a stage of the emanating existence, it will be its effect. But the question is how can we establish that there is an existent more perfect than material existents, such that these existents are to be considered a weaker level of the more perfect existent, so that they would be effects of it?

The answer to this question is to be obtained from the principle indicated earlier, according to which being an effect is essential to the existence of the effect and is inviolable. So, it is not the case that two assumptions are involved in the realization of an existent: one that it is the effect of a more perfect existent, and the other that it is independent and without need of a cause for its occurrence. But if something has the possibility of being an effect, it is certain to be an effect.

And whenever there is an existent such that a more perfect existent than it can be imagined, it will have the possibility of being an effect, and hence it is certain to be an effect and it will no longer have the possibility of not being an effect, for if the possibility of not being an effect were also supposed, this would mean that essentially it does not require being or not being an effect.

That is, if it were an effect, its being an effect would not be essential, while in the previous discussion it became clear that being an effect is essential to the existence of the effect. Thus, something which is capable of being an effect, that is, for which one can suppose a more perfect existent, will have to be an effect.

At the end of this lesson we should note that the weakness of the level of existence has some indicators by means of which one can recognize that an existent is an effect, and among these are limitations in time and place, limitations in a thing's effects, changeability, moveability and destructibility.

Lesson 34: The Causal Relation among Material Things

The Cause of Belief in the Causal Relation among Material Things

Sometimes it is said that the knowledge of the causal relation among all existents, including material existents, is an innate (fitri) knowledge with which the human intellect has been fashioned, and on the basis of which specific causes and effects are determined. However, as has been discussed in the lessons on epistemology, no acquired knowledge can be proven to be innate, and assuming that it occurs, there would be no guarantee of its correspondence with reality.

However, as has been mentioned in Lesson Twenty-Three, some knowledge is near to being self-evident (bidahat), and in a sense can be considered to be 'innate', such as knowledge of the existence of material realities, which really has its source in a hidden or semi-conscious reasoning. The knowledge of the existence of the causal relation and the dependence of some material existents on others is also of this sort.

The closer we get to the beginning of infancy, the more unconscious reasoning becomes, until it becomes similar to the instinctive perceptions of animals. To the extent that man's consciousness develops, reasoning becomes more manifestly conscious, until it takes the form of logical reasoning.

For example, when a child hears a sound simultaneously with the collision of two objects, he vaguely understands the dependence of the appearance of the noise on the collision. When he witnesses the lighting of a lamp along with the flipping of a switch, he understands there to be another dependence of the same sort. In brief, his soul becomes thus disposed to understand the existence of the causal relation among material phenomena. However, he is not able to understand this relation in the form of a logical proposition or to express it in exact terms.

Eventually he develops sufficient powers of mental analysis to understand this subject in the form of a logical proposition, and to expound the hidden foundational reasoning in the form of a logical proof. Of course, it is possible that at the beginning of this process one will use a concept which is not sufficiently precise, or one will present an argument which from a logical point of view is fallacious.

For example, one might speculate that everything depends upon something else, or that every existent appears in a specific time and place. However, these unfortunate generalizations and other inadequacies in the interpretation of percepts and reasonings, are effects of the weakness of the analytic powers of the mind, and to the extent that one develops and strengthens the above-mentioned powers by means of logical exercises and philosophical analysis one will make fewer such mistakes.

In any case, as we have explained repeatedly, the firmest foundation for belief in the existence of the causal relation is knowledge by presence. The discovery of instances of causes and effects within the self is considered to be the sturdiest basis for the abstraction of the universal concepts of cause and effect and prepares the ground for the conscious understanding of the principle of causation as a self-evident (badihi) proposition.

However, since material instances of cause and effect cannot be known through knowledge by presence, and on the other hand, as mentioned above, since it is unacceptable to consider the belief in the causal relation among material things to be innate, there is no alternative but to consider the source of such beliefs to lie in a kind of reasoning, which, at its inception was semi-conscious and spontaneous, and gradually takes the form of clear logical reasoning.

Since this belief is close to being self-evident it may be called, in a sense, innate. In order to evaluate this belief one must first state this proposition in an exact form, and then give a logical explanation of it.

An Evaluation of the Above-mentioned Belief

The causal relation among material things may be stated in several forms. One is: “Material existents are dependent upon one another.” This proposition, which is called ‘unquantified’ (muhmalah) in logic, does not indicate the universality or particularity of this relation. That is, it does not mean that all material things have this relation with one another, or that only some of them have such a relation.

It is certain that there exists a causal relation among some of them, and really, it is evaluated as a particular affirmative proposition, the contradictory of a universal negative proposition, the absolute negation of causation among material things, which view is associated with the Ash‘arites.

The second form is: “All material existents have a causal relation with another material existent.” This means that no material existent is to be found which is neither a cause nor an effect of another material existent. This leaves open the possibility that one or more material existents are merely causes for some phenomena and that they themselves are not the effects of other material existents (although they may be the effects of supernatural causes), the possibility also is left open that they are merely effects of material causes, and that they themselves are not causes of other material phenomena.

The third form is: “Every material existent has a material cause,” and the fourth form is: “Every material existent is the cause of another material existent and is the effect of another material existent.” An implication of the third proposition is a backward stretching infinite regress of material causes. An implication of the fourth proposition is an infinite regress in both directions.

Among these propositions, the first is certain and close to being self-evident, and it is the one which may be called innate. However, regarding the other propositions, they have been more or less in dispute and subject to differences of opinion which are presented in detailed philosophical texts under various topics.

Just as the principle of the existence of material things is not self-evident and needs to be proven, the existence of the causal relation among material things is also not self-evident. The warrant for this belief is not at the same level as the belief in the universal principle of causation, in the form of a verity proposition (qadhiyyah haqiqiyyah), nor is it on the level of the belief in the existence of the causal relation for the totality of existents, some of whose instances are known through knowledge by presence.

Rather, its logical warrant is at the level of speculative certainties (nazariyyat yaqini), which on the one hand are based on the self-evident principle of causality, and on the other hand are based on empirical premises.

That is, after the real existence of material existents is established, and idealistic doubts are refuted, then with the help of experiences which establish that some material phenomena do not occur without some others, it may be concluded that the causal relation in its general sense, that is, absolute dependency (not a dependency that is absolute), holds among material existents, and that the material

existent, in addition to having a need for a creative cause at the core of its being, is also such that its changes and alterations depend on the fulfillment of various conditions which are provided by other material existents, conditions which, in reality, serve to prepare matter for the acquisition of new existential perfections, even if the previous perfection must then be abandoned.

The Way to the Knowledge of Material Causes

As was indicated, there are many ways with regard to the absolute knowledge of causes and effects, but the way to the knowledge of material causes and effects is limited to empirical proof, that is, proof in which empirical premises have also been employed.

It is sometimes imagined that the repeated observation of two successive phenomena is reason for the first phenomenon to be the cause of the second. That is, empirical premises are used for the establishment of the causation of one material existent for another, in the form: “This phenomenon repeatedly comes into existence following another phenomenon.” Then another premise must be added: “For every two existents which occur in this form, the first is the cause of the second.” The conclusion obtained is that in the case experienced, the first phenomenon is the cause of the second phenomenon.

However, as has been shown time and time again, succession or simultaneity are more general than causation, and cannot be considered to be decisive reasons for causation, that is, the major premise of this syllogism is not certain, and therefore neither can its conclusion be certain.

Logicians, when discussing the validity of empirical propositions, have said that the mutual implication (talazum) of two phenomena, either constantly or in most cases, indicates the causal relation between them, for persistent or nearly persistent simultaneity cannot be accidental.

Regarding this statement it must be said that, first of all, this proposition implies that something accidental cannot be persistent or nearly persistent, or in technical terms, that compulsion (qasr) which occurs persistently or nearly persistently is impossible. Secondly, it is nearly impossible to establish the persistent or nearly persistent mutual implication of two phenomena, and no experimenter can claim that he has subjected most occurrences of two phenomena to experiment.

Likewise, another principle is sometimes employed to complement this proof, that two similar things will have similar effects. (“Judgment regarding similar cases of what is permissible or impermissible is one.”) Therefore, regarding cases of experimentation, if one observes the occurrence of a phenomenon under certain conditions, one will know that in other conditions which are exactly the same, the above phenomenon will also occur.

In this way the causal relation between [the conditions and the phenomenon] is discovered. However, this principle is not of very much practical efficiency, for the establishment of the complete similarity of two circumstances is no easy task.

It thus seems that the only way to utilize experience in order to establish definitively the causal relation between two given phenomena is to control the conditions for the occurrence of one phenomenon and to observe which of the controlled elements and conditions when changed alters this phenomenon, and with the existence of which conditions the phenomenon remains the same.

For example, if in the controlled environment of the laboratory one observes that only with the connection of two given wires, a light bulb is lit, and that it goes out when they are disconnected, one may conclude that the above connection is the condition for the appearance of light in the bulb (transforming the electrical energy into light).

If the conditions are precisely controlled, the performance of an experiment a single time will be sufficient. However, since the precise control of the conditions is no easy task, in order to be sure, the experiment is often performed repeatedly.

However, at the same time, it is extremely difficult to establish that the effective cause of the appearance of a phenomenon is the very factors identified in the experimental environment and that no other unidentified and unperceived factor exists. Even more difficult than this is to establish that it is the only factor and is irreplaceable, for there is always the possibility that under other conditions the given phenomenon will occur by means of other factors.

Newer and newer discoveries in physics and chemistry confirm this possibility. This is why empirical conclusions will never have the value of the self-evident, and basically cannot produce redoubled certainty (certain beliefs whose contrary is impossible). Hence, the achievements of the empirical sciences will never have the value of the conclusions of pure rational proofs.

We should note that the existence of the mentioned possibilities which prevent the acquisition of redoubled certainty in relation to the principles of the empirical sciences is of no harm for the certainty of the causal relation among material existents, for with simple experiments it can be established that by excluding one phenomenon, another phenomenon will be eliminated. This shows that the first phenomenon is a kind of incomplete cause of the second.

For example, with the setting of the sun, the sky becomes dark; and with the absence of water, trees become dry. Thousands of other examples can be observed repeatedly in the daily lives of men. What is difficult is to determine precisely all the factors and conditions which have an effect on the occurrence of a material phenomenon.

If one were able to precisely determine all of them, this would not imply a denial of the influence of a supernatural agent, for the performance of an experiment in the case of such an agent is not possible. The existence or nonexistence of a supernatural agent can only be established with pure rational proof.

Lesson 35: The Dependence of the Effect on the Cause

The Mutual Implication of Cause and Effect

In consideration of the definitions of cause and effect it is easy to see that not only is the occurrence of the effect impossible without its internal causes (the parts that compose it), but it is impossible without the occurrence of any of the parts of the complete cause, for it is assumed that the existence of the effect is in need of all the parts of the complete cause, and to suppose that it could occur without one of them would mean that it was not in need of it.

Of course, in cases where the cause is replaceable, the existence of any of its alternates would suffice, but the assumption of the existence of the effect without any of them is impossible. In cases in which it is imagined that an effect comes into existence without a cause (as in cases of miracles), what really happens is that an unusual, unknown cause replaces the usual and known cause.

On the other hand, in cases in which there is a complete cause, the existence of its effect will be necessitated, for the meaning of complete cause is that everything needed for the effect is satisfied, and the supposition that the effect does not occur would mean that its existence is in need of something else, which is contrary to the original supposition.

The assumption that something prevents the occurrence of the effect signifies the absence of the completeness of the cause, for 'the absence of an impediment' is also a condition for the occurrence of the effect, and the assumption of the completeness of the cause includes this negative condition. That is, when we say that the complete cause of something has occurred, this means that in addition to the occurrence of the positive existing causes and conditions, an impediment to the occurrence of the effect does not exist.

Some scholastic theologians have imagined that this principle applies specifically to involuntary causes which do not act out of a will, and that in cases of free agents, however, after the occurrence of all the parts of the cause there is still room for the volition and choice of the agent.

They fail to observe the fact that rational principles cannot be thus restricted, and that in cases of voluntary action, the will of the agent is one of the parts of the complete cause, and as long as there is no will to carry out the voluntary action, the complete cause is not realized, even if all the other conditions of existence and nonexistence should obtain.

The conclusion is that every cause, complete or incomplete, has relative necessity (wujub bil–qiyas) in relation to its effect, and similarly every effect has relative necessity in relation to its complete cause, and

these two points may be together referred to as ‘the rule of mutual implication of cause and effect.’

The Simultaneity of Cause and Effect

From the principle of the mutual implication of cause and effect other principles may be derived, among which is the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect, which may be described as follows. Whenever an effect is a temporal existent and at least one of the parts of its complete cause is also temporal, the cause and effect will occur simultaneously, and the occurrence of the complete cause will have no temporal distance from the effect.

For if it is supposed that some time, no matter how short, elapses after the occurrence of all the parts of the complete cause and the effect occurs after that, this would imply that the existence of the effect is not necessary at that very supposed time, while the implication of the relative necessity of the effect in relation to the complete cause is that the existence of the effect becomes necessary as soon as the cause is complete.

However, this principle does not apply to incomplete causes, for the existence of the effect will not be necessary with the existence of any of them. Rather, even if just one of the parts of the complete cause is absent, the existence of the effect will be impossible, for otherwise the effect would not need the said part.

However, if the cause and effect are immaterial, and neither of them is temporal, in that case their temporal simultaneity would be meaningless. The same goes for the case in which the effect is temporal but the cause is completely immaterial, for the meaning of temporal simultaneity is that two existents occur at the same time, while something completely immaterial does not occur in the temporal realm, and has no temporal relation to any existent.

However, such an existent is existentially encompassing in relation to its own effect and present, and the absence of the effect from this cause would be impossible. This subject will become clearer by taking into account the relational character of the effect with regard to its creative cause.

On the other hand, the temporal priority of the effect to any cause, whether complete or incomplete, is impossible, for this would imply that the effect would not be in need of the above-mentioned cause at the moment it takes place, and that the existence of the cause in relation to the effect is not necessary. It is obvious that this principle is specific to temporal existents.

By taking this principle into account, it becomes completely clear that the interpretation of the causal relation as the succession of two phenomena is incorrect, for an implication of succession is the temporal priority of the.cause to the effect. Not only does this have no meaning for immaterial things and creative causes, but it is also impossible for complete causes that include non-temporal elements.

The only case to which the principle of succession applies is that of incomplete temporal causes, for

which their temporal priority to their effects is possible, such as the occurrence of a person prior to the performance of a task.

On the other hand, it has already been said that the regular succession of two phenomena is not specific to cause and effect, and many phenomena come into existence one after the other without there being any causal relation between them, such as day and night. So the relation between cases of causation and cases of succession is referred to in technical terms as one of 'generality and specificity in some respects.'

Let it not be left unsaid that the simultaneity of two existents is not confined to causes and their effects. There are many phenomena that occur simultaneously without any causal relation between them. It is even possible for two phenomena to be persistently simultaneous without any of them being the cause of the other.

For example, if a cause brings about two effects, the given effects always come into existence together, while neither of them is the cause of the other. So, the relation between cases of causation and cases of simultaneity is also one of 'generality and specificity in some respects,' that is, in some cases there is both simultaneity and causation, such as the complete temporal cause and its effect; while in some other cases causality exists but simultaneity does not, such as immaterial causes and incomplete causes that exist before the occurrence of their effects. In some cases there is simultaneity without causality, such as the simultaneous appearance of light and heat in an electric lamp.

Therefore, the correct interpretation of causation is neither in terms of the succession of two phenomena nor in terms of the simultaneity of two phenomena. Succession and simultaneity cannot even be considered to be implications of cause and effect, nor can the interpretation of causation in terms of them be considered a kind of 'specific necessity' for neither of them is specific to cause and effect.

Likewise, one cannot consider the interpretation of causation in terms of them to be a kind of 'general necessity', for neither of them is true of all cases of cause and effect. Furthermore, it is basically incorrect to define something in terms of something more general, for such a definition in no way specifies the object defined.

The Persistence of the Effect is also in Need of a Cause

Another principle which can be derived from the mutual implication of cause and effect is that the complete cause must persist for the duration of the effect, for if the effect persists after the destruction of the complete cause, or even after the destruction of one of the parts of the complete cause, this would imply that the existence of the effect would not be in need of its cause during its persistence, while this need is an essential requirement of the existence of the effect of which it can never be divested.

This principle has long been a topic of discussion among philosophers and theologians. The

philosophers have always emphasized that the persistence of an effect is also in need of a cause. They have reasoned that the criterion of the need for a cause by an effect is the effect's whatish contingency, and the whatness of the effect can never be divested of this property. Therefore, it will always be in need of a cause.

The theologians, who for the most part consider the criterion of the need for a cause to be coming into existence (huduth), or contingency and coming into existence jointly, do not consider the persistence of an effect to be in need of a cause, and it is even reported that some of them held that if it were also possible for God, the Exalted, to perish, this would be of no harm to the existence of the world.

In order to support their position, they have resorted to cases of the persistence of effects after the destruction of their causes, such as the remaining alive of a child after the death of its father, or the remaining of a building after the death of its builder.

In response to them, the philosophers say that the only criterion of the need for a cause by an effect is contingency, not coming into existence and not a combination of contingency and coming into existence. In order to establish this point, they set forth the following rational analysis: Coming into existence is an attribute of the existence of the effect, and from a rationally analytic point of view, this is posterior to its existence.

Existence is subordinate to creation, and creation (ijad) is posterior to necessity (wujub) and being made necessary (ijab). Being made necessary pertains to a thing which lacks existence, that is, which has contingent existence. This contingency is the very attribution which is abstracted from the whatness itself, for it is whatness which is equal with respect to existence and nonexistence, and does not have preponderance for either of them.

Hence, the only thing which can be the criterion for the need for a cause is this essential contingency itself, which is inseparable from whatness. For this reason the need of an effect will also be persistent, and the effect will never be without need for a cause.

However, this position, as was indicated earlier, is in conformity with the fundamentality of whatness, and with regard to the fundamentality of existence the criterion for the need for a cause must be sought in the existential characteristics of the effect, that is, as was stated by Sadr al-Muta'allihin, the criterion for the need of an effect for a cause is essential poverty (faqr-e dhati) and dependence, in other words, the weakness of its existential level which is inseparable from it.

With regard to the cases which the theologians used as evidence for the persisting of an effect after the destruction of its cause, it should be said that that which is destroyed or whose effects are terminated is not a real cause (haqiqi), but merely a preparatory cause which in reality is merely an accidental cause for the mentioned effects.

This may be further explained as follows. The building which persists after the death of its builder has a

set of real causes, including: the existence-giving cause, internal causes (matter and form), conditions for the existence of the building, such as the arrangement of the building materials in a specific shape and configuration, and a lack of impediments which could result in the separation of these materials. As long as this set of causes persists, the building will also persist.

However, if the Divine Will is not in accord with the persistence of the building, or if the building materials, due to external factors, should decay, or if the conditions which are necessary for the maintenance of the shape of the building should change, then, without a doubt, the building will be ruined. The builder who puts together the building materials is really the preparatory cause for the appearance of this particular situation regarding the building materials.

That which is a condition for the existence and persistence of the building is this very particular situation and not the person who by the movement of his hands causes the transference of the building materials and the appearance of the above-mentioned situation. The agency which is superficially related to the building is merely an accidental agency, and the builder's real agency is with respect to the movement of his own hands, which obey his will. In the absence of the will, the movement would come to a standstill, and naturally, with his own destruction there would be no possibility of its continuation.

Likewise, the existence of the child is an effect of its own real causes, which besides the existence-giving cause include specific organic materials with special qualities which make the body disposed to possess a spirit, and as long as the necessary conditions for the possession of a spirit by the body persist, its life will continue. The father and mother have no role in the persistence of these causes, factors, and conditions. Even their agency in relation to the transference of the sperm and its establishment in the womb is also an accidental agency.

Likewise, the movement of a body, in reality, is the effect of some specific energy, which comes into existence in it, and as long as this agent persists, the motion will also continue. Relating the movement of the body to an external mover is like relating an effect to its preparatory agent which plays no other role than transferring the energy to the body.

Moreover, it has become clear that preparatory agents of this kind, which are really accidental agents, are not considered to be parts of the complete cause, and the complete cause is composed of the existence-giving agent, internal causes, and conditions of existence and nonexistence.

Lesson 36: The Relations of Cause and Effect

The Homogeneity (Sinkhiyyah) of Cause and Effect

Undoubtedly, not just any effect comes into existence with any cause. Even among successive or simultaneous phenomena there is not always a causal relation. Causation is rather a specific relation among certain existents. In other words, between the cause and effect there must exist a specific relation, which can be termed the homogeneity (sinkhiyyah) of cause and effect. This principle is also an intuitive proposition which is close to being self-evident, which may be demonstrated by the simplest of internal and external experiences.

However, there is a difference between homogeneity and the relation which is necessary between cause and effect in cases of existence-giving causes on the one hand and material and preparatory causes on the other.

In the first case, the characteristics of this homogeneity can be established by rational proof, and its demonstration is as follows: Since the existence of the effect is emanated by the existence-giving cause, which can be put roughly by saying that it gives existence to its own effect, it itself must have that existence which it can then give to its effect.

If it did not possess that, it could not grant or emanate it (one who gives something cannot lack it). Noting that granting existence to an effect does not diminish the granter of anything, it becomes clear that it possesses the above-mentioned existence in a more complete form, such that the existence of the effect can be considered its radiance and luminescence.

So, the homogeneity between the existence-giving cause and its effect means that this cause has the perfection of the effect in a more perfect form. If a cause in its own essence did not possess a kind of existential perfection, it would never be able to grant this perfection to its effect.

In other words, every effect is produced by its cause which has the perfection of its effect in a more perfect form. This subject becomes clearer with regard to the relational nature of the effect with respect to its existence-giving cause and the special gradation between them, which were established in the previous chapters.

Homogeneity does not exist between material or preparatory causes and their effects, for such causes do not grant or emanate existence. Their influence is limited to alterations in the existence of their effects. With regard to the fact that not just anything can bring about any kind of change, it is summarily obtained that some sort of relation and homogeneity is also necessary between such causes and effects.

However, the characteristics of this sort of homogeneity cannot be established by rational proof, rather, it is only through experience that one can discern what sort of things can be the source of what changes, and under what conditions and with the aid of what things these changes are produced.

For example, reason, by means of conceptual analysis, would never be able to discover whether water is simple or is composed of other elements, and if the latter, of what and how many elements it is composed. What conditions are necessary for such a composition? Are these supposed conditions replaceable or not?

Hence, it is only by means of experience that it is possible to establish that water is composed in a special way of two elements, oxygen and hydrogen, that this composition requires a certain temperature and pressure and that an electrical current can speed the process of composition.

The Removal of a Doubt

We have stated that it follows from a rational proof that every existence- giving cause must possess the perfection of its effect, for it is absurd to suppose that the granter lacks that which it grants to another.

With regard to this topic, the following problem may be raised, that an implication of this principle is that existence-giving agents have material existences and their perfections, while an existence-giving agent can only be an immaterial existent which does not have matter or the specific attributes of matter. So how can something emanate that which it itself does not possess?

The answer to this problem is that what is meant by possessing the perfection of an effect is having a more perfect and higher level than the existence of the effect, such that the existence of the effect is considered to be the radiance of the cause, not that the limits of the existence of the effect are exactly preserved in the cause, and not that the cause has the same whatness as the effect.

It is clear that the greater perfection of the existence of the cause than the level of the existence of the effect is not compatible with their whatish unity. One can never abstract a single whatness from two existents which have specific gradation, one of which is considered a plane of the existence of the other and its radiance, because what it means for two existents to have a single whatness is that their existential limits correspond to one another.

This is impossible in the case of two levels of existence one of which is more perfect than the other, having fewer limitations and imperfections. However, lacking the whatness of the effect and the limits of its existence does not mean lacking its existential perfection. That which is necessary in the case of the existence-giving cause is having the existential perfections of the effect in a more perfect and higher form, not possessing its imperfections and limitations.

If the concept of a body and its implications, such as being spatial and temporal, being capable of movement and change, are not true of God, the Exalted, and completely immaterial things, this is because the above-mentioned concepts imply the imperfections and limitations of material existents rather than their perfections.

It should be noted that the solution to this problem became possible by virtue of the fundamentality of

existence, and that on the basis of the fundamentality of whatness there would be no correct solution for it, because an implication of the fundamentality of whatness is that that which is in fact emanated from the cause is the external whatness of the effect, and according to this principle the cause must be in possession of this whatness.

It cannot be said that the cause has the whatness of the effect in a more perfect form, for such graduation, especially the specific graduation among whatnesses, is meaningless. As was mentioned in Lesson Twenty-Eight, all immaterial whatnesses, especially simple whatnesses, are disparate from one another. Furthermore, the supposition of a whatness in the case of God, the Exalted, is incorrect.

Unity of an Effect for Unity of a Cause

According to a well-known philosophical principle, from a single cause nothing can be produced but a single effect, ("The one produces nothing other than the one"). However, there are disagreements about the purport of this principle and the cases to which it applies. Among these disagreements is whether by unity of cause is meant individual unity or unity of kind, and whether by unity of cause is meant complete simplicity.

For example, there is the meaning chosen by Sadr al-Muta'allihin in his "Journey of the Soul" in the Asfar, on the basis of which the above-mentioned principle is considered to be specific to the sacred divine essence in the existence of whose essence there is not even analytic complexity, such that the immediate effect of it can only be one existent, and other creatures must be produced by means of one or several intermediaries from this first effect.

Other philosophers have understood this principle to cover other cases more or less as well. Likewise, regarding the concept of 'production' (sudur) there are also differences, such as whether it is true of all causal relations, even conditions and preparatory causes, or whether it is restricted to efficient causes, or whether it is limited to existence-giving causes.

In other words, can it be said on the basis of the principle that a preparatory agent cannot have more than one effect, that one condition will have no more than one consequence, and that one natural agent will have no more than one action? In order to determine the cases to which this principle applies, one should examine carefully the reasons in support of it to discover why it is required.

Philosophers have given different kinds of reasons for this principle, but the most clear and at the same time firmest of these is a reason which originates in the principle of homogeneity between cause and effect, which may be expressed as follows: According to the principle of the homogeneity of cause and effect, the cause must possess that which it gives to the effect in a more perfect form.

Now, if it is supposed that the cause possesses just one sinkh (root) of existential perfection (i.e., a homogeneity making factor between cause and effect), naturally its effect will possess a lower level of

that perfection, not another perfection. If we suppose that two different effects are produced from one such cause, then, according to the mentioned principle, the cause must possess two roots of perfection, while it was assumed that it only possesses one root of existential perfections.

Several conclusions may be derived from a careful study of this argument.

1. This principle is specific to existence-giving causes, since, as was mentioned, this feature, that the cause must possess the perfection of its effect, is specific to existence-giving causes.

Therefore, on the basis of this principle one cannot establish that natural agents, that is the reasons for changes and alterations in material things, each have a single effect, or that, for example, there is only one thing which is the condition for the effect of an agent, or that there is only one thing which is the preparatory condition for a capability. For example, heat is a condition for various chemical actions and reactions, and heat itself comes into existence by means of various natural factors.

2. This principle is not limited to a single individual, for the above reason also includes unity of kind, and if we suppose that one kind of existence- giving cause has several individuals, and that they all possess one root of existential perfection, then naturally, their effects will all be of one kind.

3. This principle is limited to causes which possess only one root of perfection. However, if an existent has several kinds of existential perfection, or all existential perfections in a simple form, that is, if its existence possesses the above perfections with that same unity and simplicity, then this argument will not cover it.

Therefore, the above-mentioned principle does not establish anything more than the principle of the homogeneity between an existence-giving cause and its effect. The unity of the first thing produced cannot be established merely on the basis of this principle, although there is another way to establish this, which will be presented at the appropriate point.

Unity of Cause for Unity of Effect

Another well-known principle is that a single effect cannot be produced by more than a single cause, ("The one is not produced by other than the one").

Regarding this principle, despite differences, all philosophers agree that a single effect can be produced from a compound cause. So, what is meant by the unity of the cause in the above principle is not simplicity and lack of composition.

Furthermore, the production of an effect by several vertical causes, such that each of them is the cause of another, is undeniable. In other words: neither the multiplicity of mediated effects, each of which is the effect of another, nor the multiplicity of mediated causes is contrary to the above principle.

On the other hand, all philosophers agree that an individual effect will have no more than one complete cause; in technical terms, the conjunction of several complete causes for a single effect is impossible, for if all these causes were effective, then necessarily numerous effects would be brought into existence by them, so the effect would not be one.

If some of these causes were not effective, this would be contrary to the principle of the mutual implication of cause and effect or the relative necessity (wujub bil-qiyas) of the effect with respect to its complete cause.

That over which differences arise regarding this principle is whether one kind of effect must always be produced by one kind of cause, or whether it is possible that some individual cases of a kind of effect may be produced by one kind of cause, while other individual cases of the same kind of effect are produced by another kind of cause.

It is here that most people who consider this principle to include unities of kind as well as individual unities, explicitly state that several kinds of causes may effect the appearance of a single type of effect, such as heat, which is sometimes the effect of the radiance of the sun, sometimes of the burning of fire, and sometimes the effect of motion and friction.

However, with regard to what was said about the principle of homogeneity, the existence of the effect may be produced only by a cause which possesses that same sinkh (root), an existential perfection at a higher level [than that exhibited by the effect]. An effect will never be produced by an existence-giving cause which lacks the sinkh (root) which is the perfection of the effect.

Therefore, in the case of an existence-giving cause and its effect it must be said that not only is it impossible for an individual effect to be produced by two or more individual existence-giving causes, but a single type of effect also cannot be brought into existence by two or more types of existence-giving causes.

But in the case of material or preparatory causes, since there is no rational proof for the quality of their homogeneity with their effects, it cannot be established that one kind of effect must have one kind of cause. It is rationally possible that several kinds of material or preparatory causes should have a single kind of effect, as the number of conditions and their determinations cannot be established by rational proof, and all of them depend on experience.

Lesson 37: The Principles of Cause and Effect

Some Points regarding Cause and Effect

A correct conception of the meaning of cause and effect is sufficient for knowing that no existent can be the cause of its own existence, for the meaning of causality rests upon the fact that an existent depends upon the existence of another, so that with regard to the dependence of one upon the other, the concepts of cause and effect are abstracted from them, that is, this is a primary self-evident proposition, and needs no argument.

Sometimes among the discussions of the philosophers one encounters statements which may lead to such misconceptions as that an existent may be the cause of its own existence. For example, regarding God, the Exalted, it has been said, "The existence of the Necessary Existent is required by its own essence." Even regarding the expression 'the Necessary Existent by Itself,' which is used in comparison to 'the necessary existent by another,' it is possible that this may be misconstrued in such a way that just as in the case of the necessary existent by another, the 'other' is the cause, so too, in the case of the Necessary Existent by Itself, It Itself is the cause.

The truth is that this kind of discussion is the result of the limits of language, and the intent is never to establish a causal relation between the Sacred Divine Essence and Its Own Existence, but rather what is meant is to deny the ascription of being any sort of effect to that Exalted Being.

In order to make this more comprehensible, an example from ordinary (Farsi) language may be mentioned. If someone is asked, "With whose permission did you do this deed?" And he replies, "I did it with my own permission." Here it is not meant that he actually gave himself permission, but that it did not require anyone's permission. The expression 'by itself' and 'a requirement of essence' is really used by the speaker in order to deny causality, not for proving the causality of the essence.

Another point at which confusion arises is that at which philosophers consider matter and form to be causes for compound bodies, while there is really no difference or multiplicity between them, that is, a body is nothing but the conjunction of matter and form, and this implies the unity of cause and effect.

This problem is presented in philosophical texts, and it is answered in the following way. That to which causation is attributed are matter and form themselves, and that to which being an effect is attributed is the conjunction of them, under the condition that they are joined and have a compound structure, that is, if matter and form are viewed apart from being conjoined and being compounded, each of them may be considered a cause of the 'whole.'

Whenever they are considered under the condition of being joined, compounded and in the form of a whole, we call it the effect of its parts, for the existence of the whole depends on the existence of its parts.

This answer returns us to the point that the difference between cause and effect is relative to our

perspective and respect (i'tibar), while the causal relation is a matter of fact and is independent of respects (although in another sense in regard to whatish concepts, it is called respectival (i'tibari)).

The truth is that the application of [the concept of] cause to matter and form, and the application of [the concept of] effect to the conjunction of them is not free from imprecision, as was previously indicated. And if a body which is apt to take a new form is allowably called the material cause for the succeeding existent, this is because it prepares the grounds for the latter's appearance.

Another point may be made with regard to the fundamentality of existence. Since the causal relation really holds between two existences, it is clear that the whatness of something cannot be considered the cause of its existence, for whatness in itself has no reality such that it could really be the cause of something.

Likewise, a whatness cannot be considered the cause of another whatness. It is possible that it will be said that philosophers have divided causes into two types: causes of whatnesses and causes of existence.

An example of the first type is the causation of line and surface for the whatness of a triangle, and the causation of matter and form for the whatness of body. An example of the second type is the causation of the existence of fire for the existence of heat. Thus it is known that in their view there exists a kind of causal relation among whatnesses.

But this kind of discussion must be considered to be due to a looseness of the language, that is, just as, with regard to objective existence and the external world, the causal relation holds between existents, and the external existence of the effect depends upon the external existence of the cause, such a relation can also be imagined in the mental world, in the case that the conception of a whatness depends upon the conception of something else, as the conception of a triangle depends on the conception of line and surface. An implication of this looseness of language is that one cannot establish that the principles of real and entified causes and effects also apply to them.

A similar looseness also can be found in the case of secondary philosophical intelligibles, as when 'possibility' is considered to be 'the cause of need for a cause,' while neither possibility nor need are entified things, and between them it is meaningless to suppose that there is a real causal relation or influence in the external world. One of these cannot be considered the cause and the other the effect.

What is meant here is that by attending to the possibility of a whatness, the intellect is led to the recognition of this whatness's need for a cause, not that possibility, which is interpreted as the lack of necessity for existence or nonexistence, has a reality by means of which something else comes into existence called 'the need for a cause.'

We can conclude from this that the discussion of cause and effect which is presented as being one of the most basic philosophical discussions, in which specific principles for cause and effect are

propounded, must be restricted to causes and effects in the external world, and real relationships between them. If in other cases the expression ‘causation’ is employed, this is due to imprecision or looseness of language.

The Impossibility of a Causal Circle

One of the topics which is presented pertaining to the causal relation is that it is impossible for any existent, with regard to the aspect in which it is the cause and influence of the appearance of another existent, should be, in that very aspect, the effect and in need of that other existent. In other words, no cause can be the effect of its own effect.

From another perspective, a cause cannot be the cause of its own cause. This may be put in yet another way by saying that it is impossible for an existent to be both cause and effect of another existent. This is the proposition of the impossibility of a circle of causes, which can be considered to be self-evident, or at least close to being self-evident.

If the subject and predicate of this proposition are properly understood, there will be no room for doubt about it, for the implication of being a cause is being without need and the implication of being an effect is being in need, and the conjunction of being without need and being in need in one aspect is a contradiction.

It is possible that in this field doubts may arise which result from lack of precision regarding the meaning of the subject and predicate, as is the case for many self-evident propositions. For example, one may imagine that if a man’s own food is obtained only through farming, that if it were not for the products of his own farming, he would die of hunger. In this way, the above-mentioned products on the one hand would be the effects of farming and on the other hand would be the cause of it.

Hence the supposed farmer would be the cause of the cause of himself, and also the effect of the effect of himself! However, not only is the farmer not the real cause of the products of farming, and is merely a preparatory cause for them, and not only are the products of farming also not the cause of the existence of the farmer, but rather these products are only elements upon which the continuity of his life is dependent.

In other words, the existence of the farmer during the times of sowing and reaping, is a cause and not an effect, and later, it is an effect and not a cause. Likewise, the farm products, at the time of their growing, are effects, and not causes, but at the times of feeding the farmer, they are causes, and not effects. Hence being a cause and being an effect are not with regard to the same aspect. The only thing that can be said in this regard is that an existent at one time may be the preparatory cause for something which it will need in the future.

What is meant by an impossible circle is not this sort of relation; rather what is meant is that an existent

which in the same aspect in which it is the cause of the appearance of something else cannot be, in that same aspect of its being an effect, the effect of it and in need of it. In other words, it gives something to an effect which it needs from it in order to possess that same thing, and which must be obtained from this effect.

Another problem is that we see that heat causes the appearance of fire, while fire is also the cause of the heat. Hence, heat is the cause of the cause of itself. The solution to this problem is also clear, for the heat which is the cause of the fire is other than the heat which comes into existence as an effect of the fire.

Although these two heats may be one in kind, they are multiple with regard to their existence in the external world. What is meant by unity pertaining to this principle [of the impossibility of a circle of causes] is individual unity, not conceptual unity. In reality, this problem is a result of confusion between conceptual unity and the unity of instances, or is a result of confusion between two meanings of unity.

Other inconsequential problems have been presented by some materialists and Marxists, which need not be mentioned if attention is paid to the concepts of the principle [of the impossibility of a circle of causes] and the answers to the problems mentioned above.

The Impossibility of an Infinite Regress

The literal meaning of regress (tasalsul) is cases following one another in a chain, whether the links in this chain are finite or infinite, and whether or not there is a causal relation among them. However, the technical meaning is restricted to cases in which one or both directions of the chain are infinite.

Philosophers consider an infinite regress to be impossible under two conditions: First is that among the links of the chain there should be a real ordering, such that each link should follow another in reality, not conventionally; the other is that all of the links should exist at the same time, not such that when one is destroyed another comes into existence following it. For this reason, an infinite sequence of events in time is not considered to be essentially impossible.

At the same time, in the common parlance of philosophy, an infinite regress is not restricted to causal regresses, and many reasons which are given for the impossibility of a regress include regresses in which there is no causal relation among the links, such as the proofs advanced against actual infinity (Burhan–e Musamatah, Burhan–e Tatbiq, and Burhan–e Sullami) which are mentioned in the detailed books of philosophy. In these proofs, some mathematical premises are employed, although there is dispute about them.

However, some proofs are specific to causal regresses, such as the proof given by Farabi known as Burhan– e Asadd Akhsar ('the firmest and most concise proof'), and it may be stated as follows: If it is supposed that each link in a chain of existents is dependent upon another, such that if a prior link does

not exist, the dependent link would also fail to occur, this implies that this regress as a whole is dependent on another existent, for it is supposed that all of its links have this feature (of being dependent on another), and there is no alternative but to suppose that there is an existent at the head of the chain which is not itself dependent on something else. Until that existent occurs, the links of the chain will not come into existence in succession.

Hence, such a chain cannot be infinite in the direction of its beginning. In other words, an infinite regress of causes is impossible. Similar to this is a proof which is founded on the basis of the principles established by Sadr al-Muta'allihin in his transcendent philosophy for the impossibility of a regress of existence-giving causes.

It may be presented as follows: According to the fundamentality of existence and the relatedness of the existence of the effect to the existence-giving cause, every effect in relation to its creative cause is just that relation and dependence itself. It has no independence of its own. If a given cause is an effect in relation to a prior cause, it will have that same state (of dependence) to the prior cause.

Thus, if a chain of causes and effects is assumed, each of whose causes is the effect of another cause, it will be a chain of relations and dependencies. It is self-evident that dependent existence cannot occur without the occurrence of an independent existence upon which the former depends. Thus, inevitably there must be an independent existence beyond this chain of relations and dependencies in the light of which all of them occur. Therefore, this series cannot be considered to be without a beginning and without an absolutely independent member.

The difference between these two proofs lies in the fact that the first proof covers all real causes (causes which must necessarily exist with their effects), while the second proof is restricted to existence-giving causes, and which also covers complete causes, as they include existence-giving causes.

Lesson 38: The Efficient Cause

Introduction

One of the most famous classifications of causes (perhaps stated for the first time by Aristotle) is that of efficient causes, final causes, material causes and formal causes, of which the first two types are called external causes and the latter two are called internal causes or 'causes of subsistence' ('ilal-e qawam), and from one perspective are called causes of whatness.

From the previous lessons it has become clear that the application (of the concept of) cause to the latter two types involves some imprecision. At the end of Lesson Thirty-One it was indicated that the material

and formal causes are the very matter and form of the bodies, which are called material and formal causes in relation to compound bodies and are called matter and form in relation to each other, and which are naturally specific to material things.

Since we will discuss matter and form later,[1] here discussion of them may be postponed. The section on Causality will be concluded with a discussion of efficient causes and final causes.

The Efficient Cause and its Types

By the efficient cause is meant an existent by which another existent (the effect) is brought about, and in its general sense it also includes natural agents which have an effect on the movements and changes of bodies.

Ancient philosophers recognized two kinds of actions and influences in the world: one is willful action (fi'l iradi) which is performed willfully by living existents which possess consciousness, actions such as movement and other properties which accord with the will of the agent, such as the voluntary (ikhtiyari) actions of man which occur in various forms; and the other kind is that of action done by existents without consciousness and without will which are monotonous and without variation.

The ancient philosophers held that there was a specific nature for each kind of corporeal existents which essentially had special requirements. For instance, each of the four elements, earth, water, air and fire, was considered to have a propensity for its own natural location and specific natural qualities, such that, for example, if their locations were changed by means of some external factor, their natural tendency would be to move toward their original locations. In this way they justified the falling of stones, the pouring of rain and the rising of the flames of fire. They thought of nature as the source of motion.

Later, in view of the fact that occasionally motions and influences of things occur contrary to their natural propensities, a third kind of action was established called 'constrained action' (fi'l qasri). For example, due to the blowing of the wind, dust may rise toward the sky. That was related to constrained nature of dust, and it was believed that dust, which is a kind of earth, rises toward the sky by constrained motion, and that it returns to the ground by natural motion. In such cases they believed that the motion would not persist ("the constrained is not persistent").

On the other hand, in view of the fact that it is possible for a willful agent to be forced to move contrary to his own will because of the domination of a more powerful agent, another kind of agent was posited by the name of 'coercive agent' (fa'il jabri), which is to a willful agent as constrained action is to a natural agent.

Islamic philosophers deeply pondered the issue of willful agents and at first divided them into two types: one is the intentional agent (fa'il bil-qasd) and the other is the providential agent (fa'il bil-'inayah). The basis of this division was observation of the difference between willful agents which sometimes need

motivation additional to their own whatnesses, such as man, who must be motivated in order to move of his own will from place to place.

This kind is called the intentional agent. Sometimes a willful agent does not require any motivation, and is called a providential agent. The agency of God, the Exalted, was considered to be of this second kind.

Later, the Illuminationists with greater precision established another kind of agent, the knowledgeable (‘ilmi) and voluntary (ikhtiyari) agent, whose detailed knowledge of his action is the action itself, such as the detailed (tafsili) knowledge of a man of his own mental forms is identical with those very forms themselves, and prior to their occurrence the agent has no detailed knowledge of them, but merely has a summary (ijmali) knowledge which is identical with the essence of the agent.

It is not the case that in order to imagine something one needs to imagine previously what one imagines, and this agency (fa‘iliyyah) is called agency by agreement (fa‘iliyyah bil–ridha), and they consider divine agency to be of this kind.

Finally, Sadr al–Muta’allihin, under the inspiration of Qur’anic revelation and the sayings of the gnostics, established that there is another kind of knowledgeable agent. In this kind of agency the agent has detailed knowledge of the action at the station of his essence, and has that very knowledge as concise knowledge (‘ilm ijmali) of its own essence.

This is called the agent by self– disclosure (fa‘il bil–tajalli). The agency of God is considered to be of this kind. In order to establish this sort of agency, he took advantage of the principles of his transcendent philosophy, especially of the special gradation and the possession by an existence–giving cause of the perfections of its own effects.

Likewise, noting that sometimes two agents along with one another are effective in the performance of an action, and the more remote agent performs the deed by means of the more proximate agent, Islamic philosophers established another kind of agency called subordinative agency (fa‘iliyyah bil– taskhir), which may be conjoined with other kinds of agency. For example, the digestion of food, which is performed by means of bodily capacities, but which is under the dominion and direction of the soul, is called a subordinative action.

Then, on the basis of the principles of transcendent philosophy and in view of the fact that every cause with relation to its own existence–giving cause is pure relation, an even clearer instance of the subordinative agent is established, and an even firmer philosophical interpretation may be given of the relation of an action to numerous vertical agents, including the relation of the voluntary actions of man to man himself, and in turn to the higher sources (mabadi ‘aliyyah), and to God, the Exalted.

In this way, as stated by Hakim Sabzavari, agents can be classified into eight types: natural agents (fa‘il bil–tab‘), constrained agents (fa‘il bil–qasr), intentional agents (fa‘il bil–qasd), compelled agents (fa‘il bil–jabr), subordinate agents (fa‘il bil–taskhir), providential agent (fa‘il bil–‘inayah), agent by agreement (fa‘il

bil-ridha), and the agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli).

Points Regarding the Types of Agent

1. That which was said by the ancient philosophers regarding the natural and constrained agents depended upon the established principles of ancient physics, including the theory of the four elements and their propensities in relation to their natural loci and qualities: wet, dry, heat and cold, which we now know to be invalid.

But in any case, there is no doubt that corporeal existents influence one another, and that the appearance of material phenomena depends upon the obtaining of specific grounds and conditions. Therefore, the existence of material conditions and means for the realization of corporeal effects has been and will forever continue to be valid as a philosophical principle. It is not the job of philosophy to determine the specific means and natural agents for each phenomenon. These must be established by empirical methods in the various natural sciences.

By way of example, on the basis of modern scientific theory, spatial movement can be considered an essential requisite of light, and the forces of attraction and repulsion may be construed as agents of the compulsory movement of bodies. In this way, it is more appropriate to relate action to the compulsory force, and to consider the compelled bodies as merely passive, despite the fact that according to grammar they may be considered agents, and we know that the principles of philosophy do not follow the dictates of grammar.

2. The expression 'determination' (jabr) which is used as the opposite of 'freedom' (ikhtiyar) is sometimes seen as the antithesis of freedom and in this sense it is also applied to natural and constrained agents, but sometimes it is restricted to cases which have the capability for freedom.

The term 'determined' is used only for a voluntary agent which loses its own freedom in certain conditions under the influence of powerful external factors. The meaning of 'compelled agent' (fa'il bil-jabr) is this latter meaning. It is to be noted that losing freedom has various levels, for example, the action of someone who is coerced to do something under threat may be construed as 'compelled.'

Likewise, someone who in certain conditions has no alternative but to eat carrion to survive, is also considered.to perform a 'compelled' action. But in cases of compulsion and emergency freedom is not entirely negated, but the scope of the freedom of the agent is limited in relation to ordinary circumstances.

Apparently, the sense of [the term] compelled agent used by the philosophers does not cover these cases, but they mean cases in which the freedom of the agent is totally negated. Thus it may be said that such an action is really produced by the one who forces, and its relation to the forced individual is passive, as was mentioned with regard to the case of constrained action.

3. Before the Islamic philosophers established various kinds of voluntary agents, including providential agent (fa'il bil-'inayah), agent by agreement (fa'il bil-ridha), and the agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli), it was imagined that voluntary agency was limited to intentional agents.

Therefore, some of the mutakallimin have thought of the agency of God, the Exalted, as being intentional. Even after the Islamic philosophers came to view the divine realm as being free of agency of this kind, which implies deficiency and attributes of contingency, some of the mutakallimin condemned them as deniers of the freedom of the Lord.

The truth is that the highest level of freedom is restricted to the sacred divine essence, and its lowest level exists in intentional agents. In order to clarify this subject, it is necessary to explain something about will and freedom.

Will and Freedom

The expressions, will and freedom has various applications which are more or less related to one another, but neglect of these differences is occasion for confusion and mistake. For this reason we will first indicate the cases in which each of them is used, then we will compare them with the types of agents.

Will

The expression 'will' (iradah) has a general meaning which is roughly synonymous with desiring and favoring, and with this meaning it is also used with respect to God, the Exalted, as in the case of man it is recognized as a spiritual quality (the opposite of repugnance).

In this respect it is similar to knowledge ('ilm), which on the one hand includes the essential knowledge of the Divinity, and on the other hand includes the acquired knowledge of man, which is considered to be a spiritual quality. God willing, in the section on theology a further explanation of this will be given. It is to be noted that the expression [God's] 'revealed will' (iradah-ye tashri'i), which is applied to the voluntary actions of another agent, also is an instance of 'will' in its general meaning.

The second meaning of 'will' is that of deciding to perform some deed, and this depends upon the idea (tasawwur) of the deed and affirmation (tasdiq) of some benefit (including pleasure), and it is considered to be a 'real differentia' (fasl al-haqiqi) of animal (that which moves by will), and it is also considered a characteristic of the intentional agent.

There have been discussions of the true significance (haqiqat) of 'will' and many philosophers have considered it to be a kind of spiritual quality and the opposite of 'repugnance.' However it seems that 'will' in this sense is an action of the soul, and has no opposite, although with a certain amount of fudging the opposite of it can be considered to be a state of wonder or vacillation.

A more specific sense of 'will' is restricted to rational existents, and it means a decision which results from rational preference, and in this sense it is not used for animals. According to this meaning, a willful action is synonymous with a planned action, and is the opposite of an instinctive action or one done for pure enjoyment.

Freedom

The term 'freedom' also has a general meaning which is the opposite of pure determinism, and it means that an intelligent agent performs a deed on the basis of his own desire without being forced by another agent.

The second meaning of 'freedom' is that an agent has two opposite inclinations and prefers one over the other, and in this meaning, it is equivalent to selection and choice, and it is a criterion for duty, reward and punishment.

The third meaning is the choice of a deed on the basis of the agent's internal inclination, and another person can never exert any influence on its performance. It is the opposite of 'compulsory action' which is performed under pressure or under the threat of another.

The fourth meaning is the choice of a deed which is not influenced by the limitations of one's possibilities or the straits in which the agent finds himself. It is the opposite of an 'urgent deed' which is performed under the influence of such limitations. According to this meaning, someone who in time of famine has no choice but to eat carrion in order to survive, does not act freely, even though he may be called free in some other sense.

Now, in view of the various meanings of will and freedom, we will review the types of cognitive agents.

The intentional agent (fa'il bil-qasd) can be considered an agent possessing all the three meanings of will, for his deed is favored, is decided upon, and the decision is made on the basis of rational preference. Only a group of intentional actions which are done for pure enjoyment will not be willful.

The intentional agent can also have freedom in all the four senses, although there are some types of intentional deeds which cannot be considered free in the second, third or fourth senses; however, all of them will be free in the first sense.

For example, breathing, which man has no inclination to abandon, is not free in the second sense. A forced deed will not be free in the third sense. Eating carrion in time of famine is not free in the fourth sense. Nevertheless, all of these actions are free in the first sense, for it is not the case that the freedom of the agent is totally negated.

With regard to the providential agent (fa'il bil-'inayah), the agent by agreement (fa'il bil-ridha), and the agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli), these will be considered willful only in the first sense, for these

agents do not need to think or decide.

Likewise, they are considered to be free in the first, third, and fourth senses because they do not perform their deeds under compulsion, the pressure of external factors or conditions. It is only in the second sense that these agents cannot be considered free, for it is not necessary for them to choose between opposing motivations.

Thus, it has become clear that will, in the first sense, and freedom, in the first sense, are always equivalent in extension, but will in the second and third senses is more specific than freedom in the first, third, and fourth senses, for it does not apply to the providential agent (fa'il bil- 'inayah), the agent by agreement (fa'il bil-ridha), and the agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli), and the opposite of freedom in the mentioned meanings can be applied to all these cases. In this way it becomes clear that the denial of will in the second and third senses with regard to God, the Exalted, or completely immaterial things, does not mean the denial of the freedom of such agents.

It has also become clear that will, in the sense of decision to perform a deed can be considered a free action, although, it is not a kind of intentional action, and is not based on the will and decision of another. Perhaps the soul in relation to the will may be considered an agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli).

Finally, the conclusion is obtained that the highest levels of freedom are restricted to God, the Exalted, for He is not only free from the influence of external factors, but is also free of opposing internal inclinations. Then, completely immaterial things have degrees of freedom, for they are only under the subordination of the Divine will, but there is no sort of pressure exerted upon them and they are not subject to internal conflicts, and they are not subject to the domination of one inclination over others.

However, the souls attached to matter, such as man, have the lowest level of freedom, and their wills can be shaped more or less under the influence of external factors. At the same time all of their free actions are not of the same level, and, for example, man's freedom in the creation of mental forms (which is a sort of action by agreement) is much more free and perfect than his freedom to perform physical deeds (which are intentional actions), for the latter deeds are in need of non-voluntary conditions.

1. In Lesson Forty-Six.

Lesson 39: The Final Cause

An Analysis regarding Free Actions

No free and willful deed (in the general senses of these terms) is performed without the consciousness and knowledge of the agent, regardless of whether this knowledge is the very essence of the agent, as in the case of the agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli), or whether this knowledge is the very action itself, as in the case of the agent by agreement (fa'il bil-ridha), or whether this knowledge is an implication of knowledge of the essence, as is believed in the case of the providential agent, or whether this knowledge is a separable accident of the essence, as in the case of the intentional agent.

Likewise there is no free and willful deed in relation to which the agent does not have some sort of affection (mahabbah), satisfaction, inclination and attraction, such that it is done with complete unwillingness, aversion and disgust. Even in the case of someone who takes bad tasting medicine with repugnance, or someone who decides to undergo surgery allowing a part of his body to be cut, the person who does these things does them because he has an interest in his own health, and his health is not to be obtained except through taking bitter medicines or cutting the infected part of the body. In this respect the taking of the medicine and the losing of one's hand are desired. This desire conquers the aversion to the bad taste and the discomfort of the loss of a limb.

The affection for and desire of a deed differ with the kinds of agents, and there are various concepts which are applied to them. Sometimes only the concept of affection is applicable, an affection which is the very essence of the agent, such as with the agent by self-disclosure.

Sometimes the concept of satisfaction (ridha) is applicable, such as with the agent by agreement (fa'il bil- ridha); sometimes the affection is an implication of the essence, as with the providential agent; and sometimes it is a kind of spiritual quality and is a separable accident of the essence, such as yearning (shawq), as with the intentional agent.

The most inclusive concept which includes all the cases is the concept of affection in the general sense. Its criterion is the perception of agreeability and the perfection of the beloved, and it may be termed desirability. Therefore, it may be said that a voluntary action depends on the agent's considering the action to be agreeable with his own essence, and for this reason he desires it and likes it.

At last sometimes a voluntary agent possesses all of its own perfections, and his affection pertains to an action in so far as it is an effect of his own perfection, as in the case of completely immaterial things. Sometimes its affection pertains to a perfection it lacks, and the action is performed in order to obtain and reach that perfection, as with animal and human souls whose own voluntary actions are for the sake of reaching a state which is agreeable with their essences, and they obtain pleasure and benefit from it.

The difference between these two sorts is that in the first case the affection for the existing perfection (kamal-e mawjud) is the source of the performance of the action. However, in the second case, the affection for the 'absent perfection' (kamal-e mafqud) and yearning to obtain it is the source of the

activity.

Also, in the first case, the existing perfection is the 'cause' of the performance of the action, and by no means may it be considered an effect, but in the second case the absent perfection is obtained by means of the action, and it may be considered a kind of effect of it. However, in both cases, the desire and affection for perfection is fundamental, and the desire and affection for the deed is subordinate.

Perfection and Goodness

A point to be noted is that what is meant by perfection here is an ontological attribute which is agreeable with the essence of the agent, which is sometimes the source of the performance of a voluntary action, and sometimes it comes into existence as an effect of the action. A perfection which is obtained as an effect of a willful action is sometimes the ultimate perfection of the agent or a preliminary for reaching it.

In this respect it is called real goodness (khayr–e haqiqi) in philosophical terms. Sometimes it is merely agreeable with one of the faculties and powers of the agent, however much it may interfere with other perfections and its ultimate perfection, and, on balance harm the agent, and in this case it is called imagined goodness (khayr–e maznun).

For example, a natural result of eating food is perfection for the vegetative faculty, which is common to man, animals and plants. The pleasure which is obtained through it is perfection for the faculty which perceives it, and it is common between man and animals. Moreover, if the eating of food is for a righteous intention, and in order to obtain power for the performance of one's divine duty, this will bring about a human perfection. In this case it will be a means of obtaining real goodness, as well.

However, if it is merely for animal pleasure, especially if prohibited foods are used, this will merely cause the perfection of some of a person's faculties, and will do harm to his ultimate perfection. In conclusion, it will not yield the real perfection of man. Hence, it is called 'fancied goodness' or 'imagined goodness.'

Furthermore, the situations appropriate to the use of the expressions 'freedom' (ikhtiyar) and 'goodness' (khayr) have also become clear, for every voluntary agent performs only those deeds which are appropriate to his own perfection, and among the voluntary agents, intentional agents perform deeds which are means for achieving their own perfection and good, whether real or fancied, even if the supposed good is pleasure or escaping from pain and suffering.

It is possible that difficulties may be raised regarding the universality of this principle, for there may be people who are uninterested in worldly pleasures that at least perform some voluntary deeds for the good of others and pay no heed to their own good, and sometimes they even sacrifice their own lives for others.

So it cannot be said that generally, every intentional agent performs his deeds for his own good and to reach perfection!. The answer is that these sorts of deeds, whether they are performed due to the

influence of the arousing of emotions, or for the sake of achieving an eternal reward or the pleasure of God, ultimately lead to the good of the agent himself; that is, as a result of such self-sacrifice, he either satisfies his emotions, or he attains to spiritual and heavenly stations and divine pleasure. So, the fundamental motivation of the agent is the attainment of his own perfection and goodness, and service to others is really a means for obtaining perfection.

At the utmost sometimes man's motivations are effective in a conscious form, sometimes semi-consciously, and sometimes unconsciously. For example, in cases where the emotions are aroused, the attention of man is drawn to the interests and benefits of others, and he no longer pays conscious attention to his own good and perfection, but this does not mean that it has no relevance at all.

The reason is that if he is asked why you perform such an act of self- sacrifice. He will answer, "Because I care," or "Because this deed is virtuous and humane," or "Because it will bring a spiritual reward or will lead to divine pleasure." So, the fundamental motivation will be the satisfaction of one's emotions, or taking pleasure in service to others, or to attain human virtue and perfection, or to achieve a heavenly reward and divine pleasure and nearness to God, even if the agent pays no conscious attention to this inner motivation when performing his deed.

The End and the Final Cause

From the explanation given regarding voluntary actions, it has become clear that such deeds in addition to being in need of an agent—their efficient cause being the essence of the agent—also depend on his knowledge and will. In the case of intentional agents, imagining such results of the intended deed as pleasure, benefit, goodness and perfection, inspires his yearning to perform it.

So, the decision to perform a deed depends on yearning pertaining primarily to the results of the deed, and secondarily to the deed itself. And the obtaining of this yearning is conditioned on the imagination of the deed and its results, and the affirmation of the desirability of the results. Since the result of the deed is primarily desired (as opposed to the deed itself which is secondarily desired), it is called the end (ghayah), and knowledge of and affection for it are called the final cause ('illat-e gha'i). On this basis, a kind of cause called the final cause is established for the performance of a voluntary action.

It is necessary here to mention several important points.

1. The establishment of the final cause for every voluntary action does not mean that there necessarily occur in the essence of the free agent such things as knowledge, yearning, and decision. In other words, it is not necessary that the final cause be other than the efficient cause and supplementary to it; rather, this difference is specific to intentional agents,.the source of whose knowledge and yearning is additional to their essences.

However, for some voluntary agents it is possible that either summary or detailed knowledge of the deed

and its end, and also the primary affection for the end, as well as the secondary and subordinate affection for the action, be the very essence of the agent, or implications of it.

That which is necessary for all voluntary agents is knowledge and will in their general senses, whether they are identical with the essence or are additional to it, and whether the knowledge is presentational knowledge or acquired knowledge, and whether the will is the same as love of the essence, and consequently the same as the essence, or an action or a quality additional to the essence, and whether it is an implication of the essence, or a separable accident of it.

Hence the absence of a knowledge and will additional to the essence in some types of voluntary agents does not mean a negation of a final cause; rather it means the unity of the efficient cause and the final cause, as in complete immaterial existents, whose knowledge, affection, and other attributes of perfection are identical with their essence and are not other than the essence.

The identity of these attributes with the essence does not amount to a negation of knowledge, affection, power, life, and similar attributes.

2. Usually philosophers consider knowledge of the desired result or knowledge of the goodness of a deed to be its final cause, and sometimes they put this by saying that the imagination of the end or its mental existence is the final cause, and sometimes they also say that the whatness of the end which occurs with a mental existence before performing the deed is the final cause.

Likewise, they consider knowledge as the cause of the appearance of yearning, and say that knowledge brings about yearning. However, it seems that these expressions are not free of carelessness and it is best to call the final cause affection in its broadest sense, which in some cases appears in the form of agreeability and yearning, for it is the affection for goodness and perfection which drives the voluntary agent toward the performance of a deed, and knowledge is really a condition for its occurrence, not the creative cause of it.

It is clear that considering the whatness of the end as the final cause is not compatible with the fundamentality of existence, although this kind of expression can be found among the Peripatetics, who believe in the fundamentality of existence.

3. The requirement of the agent's knowledge of and affection for the result of a voluntary deed does not mean that the agent must have detailed awareness of the deed and its result, nor does it mean that the result of the deed must really be the true desire and the real perfection and goodness of the agent.

Rather, a summary attention would suffice, and an error in determining what is good does not take away from the fact that the action is voluntary nor does it deprive it of a final cause. Therefore, for one who becomes accustomed to performing a deed it is not necessary to pay detailed attention to the deed, the manner of performing it, or its results.

Rather, actions performed by habit also enjoy a kind of knowledge of desirability, and this amount of knowledge suffices for them to be voluntary. Likewise, the origin of actions which are performed on the assumption of achieving some desired result is in reality affection for goodness, even if the goodness is merely imaginary, or if due to the influence of obstacles the desired conclusion is not obtained.

In reality, the final cause for such sorts of deeds is the wish for a kind of pleasure and goodness and the hope of achieving them.

4. The expression 'end' has another meaning which is applied to the final destination of motion, and equivocation may lead to possible errors, especially since in cases in which deeds are performed gradually and with motion, the desired result is obtained when the motion comes to an end. Among the mistakes which it is possible to make by confusing these two terms is that one may imagine that the essential end of motion is the primary desired goal of the agent itself and the very point at which motion comes to an end.

Since this is the final destination of motion, it should be the primary desired goal of the agent, while it is possible that something which is simultaneous with motion's coming to an end, which may be considered the accidental end in relation to motion, is the real primary goal of the agent, and the agent's first intention pertains to that very thing.

For example, someone who moves in order to meet a friend has as his primary destination the meeting with his friend—or rather his basic aim is pleasure which he derives from seeing his friend—whereas the essential end of the motion is that very point at which motion comes to an end, and the end of the moving thing as such is also reaching this same point, and meeting his friend at that location is considered to be the accidental end of the motion, not to mention the pleasure or benefit he obtains by it.

5. In view of the causal relation, in its general sense, among phenomena of the world, it is possible that the end of an action may be a means to achieve something else. This may also be a means to achieve yet a third thing.

For example, it is possible that in order to acquire knowledge a person may set out for a center of learning, and he takes the obtaining of knowledge to be a preliminary for the performance of his divine duties, and takes the performance of his divine duties as a means for obtaining nearness to God, the Exalted, which is the final perfection of man.

Such a person from the beginning has set the direction of his motion toward God, the Exalted, and his final cause is that same nearness to God, however many intermediate ends he may also have, each of which in its own turn is a means to a higher.end. However, it is possible that a person's motivation for acquiring knowledge is merely to satisfy his instinct for curiosity.

In this case, the final cause will be that same motivation. It is possible that his primary intention is to reach wealth or worldly status through the employment of knowledge. Hence, the final end for each

person is that very thing which is taken into consideration from the outset, and he performs the deed in order to achieve it.

If his deed leads to some other result to which he paid no attention at all, or attention to which had no effect on the performance of the deed, then this will not be the final cause of his deed.

From this discussion several conclusions may be obtained, the most important of which are as follows.

a. For an action, it is possible that there be several aims in series, and the closer aim will be a means to the following, and so on to the final aim.

b. Whether the result of an action is the aim does not depend solely on the causal relation between the action and its result, rather it also depends upon the attention (the intention) of the agent. From this the importance of the role of intention in value-laden actions becomes clear.

c. It is not possible for the various aims of an action to be infinite, for the intermediate aims depend on the final aim in order for them to be aims at all, and their desirability takes shape in the shadow of its desirability.

Until the agent pays attention to a final desire, he cannot take other things to be means for reaching it, for it is assumed that their desirability depends on the desirability of the final end. If we suppose that each aim is a means for another aim, all of them will be dependent, and the supposition of dependent things without something on which to depend is self-contradictory and impossible. So, there is no alternative but that something must be primarily desired, in order for other things to become desirable due to it.

In the case of human actions the case is clear, for all humans within themselves find with knowledge by presence that every deed they perform is for a specific final end. Moreover, man does not have the power for imagination of and attention to infinite cases, so as to be able to possess an infinite chain of aims.

6. Another kind of multiplicity can be conceived regarding final causes, and that is that several motivations all together may be effective in the performance of the deed, and it is even possible that each of them would suffice for performing the deed even if the other motivations it were not present.

In other words, it is possible for an agent to perform a deed for several parallel aims, or as the saying goes, "to kill two birds with one stone."[1] Therefore, the conjunction of two final causes for the performance of one action is not impossible, unlike the conjunction of two parallel complete efficient causes.

1. The literal Persian is "to hit two targets with one stone."

Lesson 40: The Purposefulness of the Cosmos

Introduction

The final cause, in the sense which has been explained, is specific to voluntary actions, but according to that which has been reported from Aristotle, it seems that he held that natural actions also have final causes, and those who followed the Peripatetics also accepted this, and they considered the denial of final causes for natural actions to be equal to regarding them as being accidental.

Contrary to the assertion that natural events are accidental, according to a view which has been attributed in various forms to Democritus, Empedocles, and Epicures, there is a final cause for all phenomena.

We shall first state the reported position of Aristotle and its criticism, then we will explain something about chance and accident, and finally we will state the correct meaning of the 'purposefulness of the cosmos.'

Aristotle's View regarding the Final Cause

In the first book of the Metaphysics, after mentioning the views of the ancient philosophers regarding the cause of the appearance of phenomena, Aristotle asserts that none of them have precisely taken into consideration the final cause. Then with the analysis of motion and change of material existents, he concludes that every moving or changing existent is traveling toward an end which is its perfection, and the motion itself, which is a prelude for reaching the above-mentioned end, is considered to be its first perfection.

Hence, motion is defined as "the first perfection of a potential existent qua potential."[1] He adds that every existent has its own specific perfection, and for this reason, every moving thing has a determinate end which it wants to reach. This perfection is sometimes the same form which it wants to take, such as the form of the oak tree for the acorn while it is in the process of germinating and growing.

Sometimes it is one of its accidents, such as a stone which is moving from the sky to the ground, in which case coming to rest on the ground is one of its accidents and perfections. In conclusion, every natural existent has a specific natural inclination toward a determinate end, which causes motion in the direction of that end and destination, and this is the same as the final cause for the occurrence of motion and the determination of its direction.

Aristotle considered the whole cosmos to be a single existent, whose nature includes all particular natures (such as mineral, vegetable and animal), and since its reaching its own perfection is due to a

specific proportion between particular natures, and specific qualities and quantities in the individuals of each of them, the natural inclination of the cosmos toward its own perfection causes the establishment of a special order and arrangement among its phenomena, each of which is considered to be one of its parts or members.

Criticism

It seems that this position confuses two meanings of end (which were indicated in the previous lesson), and in any case, it is disputable in various respects.

1. Assuming that this position is correct, it can establish only the final cause of the motion and change of corporeal existents, not that of all effects whether material or immaterial, moving or at rest.

2. In view of the fact that natural agents are 'agents by nature' (fa'il bil–tab') and lack consciousness and will, relating 'natural inclination' to them will be no more than metaphorical, just as chemists consider some elements to have a 'tendency to form compounds.'

The assumption of the denial of consciousness and will to agents by nature and the establishment of true desire and inclination (which implies some sense of consciousness) for them is a self–contradictory assumption.

However, if 'natural inclination' is interpreted as 'direction of motion,' a direction required by the nature of the moving existent, and is considered to be an expression based on simile and metaphor, in this case, a fact by the name of 'final cause' will not have been established, and at the most the conclusion which can be obtained is that every motion which is required by the nature of the moving object, also has its direction determined by the requirements of its nature.

3. As will be stated in future sections, the fact that the end of motion is a perfection for all moving objects cannot be established in the sense that moving objects always become more perfect with their movement, so that one can interpret motion in the light of this as 'the first perfection,' for many motions and changes are declinings and decreasings, such as the shrinking motion of plants and animals, the declining process of which toward dryness and death begins after their having reached the end of their growth.

Likewise the coming to rest of a stone on the ground and the like cannot be considered to be perfections of minerals. Therefore, on the assumption that a correct meaning may be considered for the natural inclination of every existent towards its own perfection, declining motions and those which are not toward perfection will still lack final causes.

4. It is extremely difficult to establish the real unity of the natural cosmos and likewise to establish its natural desire for perfection and to explain the cause of the design and harmony of the parts of the cosmos in terms of such desire.

Similarly, the assumption of the existence of a universal soul for the cosmos and the existence of its spiritual yearning toward perfection is at the very least an ungrounded assumption, and thus far we have not found any proof to establish it. If a soul and spiritual yearning are to be established for the natural cosmos, then its motion must be understood as 'intentional' rather than 'natural,' and thus the existence of a final cause for its actions will not be a kind of final cause for natural actions.

The Solution to Several Problems

Here, it is possible that several problems will come to mind: one is that if natural actions do not have final causes, then phenomena will be accidental, while belief in accidentality and chance is invalid.

Another is that with the denial of the final cause for natural phenomena an intellectual explanation cannot be given for the arrangement of the wonderful order and harmony which governs the cosmos. The third is that if among natural actions and their ends there existed no necessary relation, then no natural phenomenon would be predictable. For example, it would be rational to expect that from an acorn an olive tree may grow.

In order to answer the first problem, it is first necessary to explain something about chance and accident and their several meanings. When it is said that a certain event occurred by chance or by accident, it is possible that one may intend any of the following six meanings:

1. The supposed event has no efficient cause. It is self-evident that chance in this sense is impossible, but this has no relation to the problem under discussion.

2. It is not expected that the action should have been performed by such an agent, as it is said, "Such and such a virtuous person accidentally committed a great sin." This sort of chance is not impossible, and the truth of the matter is that in such cases excessive lust or anger dominated him, and in reality, his avoidance of sin is conditional upon the absence of such abnormal and rare states. In any case, in this sense as well, chance has no relation to the subject in question.

3. The willful agent performs the action without purpose, and an intentional deed takes place without a final cause. This supposition is also erroneous, for, as was explained in the previous lesson, the final cause does not always influence [the agent] consciously. In those cases in which it is imagined that an intentional action has been performed without a purpose, in reality there was a purpose but it was not completely conscious.

4. A willful agent has performed a deed for a specific objective, but it has a result which was not intended, as someone who digs a well in order to reach water, but by chance discovers a treasure. Such chance is not impossible, but this does not imply that an intentional action occurs without a final cause, because the final cause is that for which there is hope in the soul of the agent. However, the external fulfillment of that hope does not have any causal relation to the action, but rather is an effect which

results under certain conditions.

5. A phenomenon which is absolutely not intended by anyone. This is the same opinion advanced by materialists in relation to the appearance of this cosmos, but in the view of the theists, all the phenomena of the cosmos occur and will occur on the basis of Divine Will. This will be explained in the appropriate place.

6. A phenomenon which does not occur by the intention of the proximate natural agent. This is the subject at issue. This sort of chance (if one can call it chance at all) not only is not impossible, but, in view of the meaning of 'natural agent' and the acceptance of its existence, will be necessary.

Considering the various meanings of chance, it has become clear that the denial of intention and purpose for natural agents does not mean the acceptance of chance in an erroneous sense. Moreover, the answer to the second problem has now become clear as well, for the denial of intention and purpose for the universal nature of the cosmos (supposing that such a nature exists) or for particular natures—in Aristotelian terms—does not imply the denial of the purposefulness of the cosmos.

According to theists, all the agents of the cosmos, whether immaterial or material, are under the dominion of the Divine Will, and divine agency presides over all agencies, and thus, there is no motion or rest in the cosmos which is not in conformity to the ontological will [iradah-ye takwini, as opposed to iradah-ye tashri'i, the revealed will] of God, as will be explained in the section on theology, and in this way the design and harmony of the phenomena of the cosmos will be more clearly explained.

As to the third problem, it must be said that a constant or frequent occurrence of specific predictable results is due to the homogeneity between cause and effect, that is, acorns are homogeneous only with oak trees, not with other phenomena. Admission of the homogeneity between them does not mean the acceptance of something called 'natural inclination' in the acorn which we should consider as the final cause of the oak tree.

The Purposefulness of the Cosmos

As was indicated, materialist philosophers consider all the phenomena of the cosmos (except for those which are brought about by means of man and animals) to be accidental and without purpose (in the fifth sense of chance mentioned above). However, theistic philosophers deem natural phenomena to be purposeful, as well, but they explain the purposefulness of the cosmos in various different ways, among which the main ways are as follows:

1. 1Aristotelians hold that for every nature there is specific inclination toward a determinate end which causes motion towards it, and likewise for the entire cosmos, they believe it has a nature whose inclination towards its own perfection causes the proportion, harmony and coherence of its particular kinds of phenomena. We have already criticized this theory and have recounted its difficulties.

2. A group of the Neoplatonists, followers of the school of Alexandria, and ʻurafa (mystics or gnostics) held that for every existent there is a kind of consciousness and will, no matter how weak and faint.

In this way they responded to some of the difficulties which were raised regarding the Aristotelian theory. According to this theory, all the agents of the cosmos will be intentional agents, and the agent by nature and by compulsion must be omitted from among the kinds of agents, for the conjunction of the acceptance of the agent by nature and the establishment of consciousness and will for each agent (as is implied by their words) implies a contradiction.

Likewise, the establishment of consciousness for natural agents is not compatible with the necessity for the knower to be immaterial (as will be explained in the appropriate place). In any case, the least of the difficulties of this position is that this matter cannot be established by proof.

3. The third way is that natural agents are subordinated agents and beyond their agency there is an agency of a higher source and ultimately the agency of God, the Exalted. In this way, all events have a purpose and final cause, not within nature but in the essences of the supernatural agents, and that which occurs in the natural cosmos is the destination of motion, not final causes!

Basically, according to the theory of the fundamentality of existence, it must be said that natures in the sense of whatnesses are respectival and have no implications bearing upon ontological matters. Specific existents which are considered to be individuals with unconscious natures have no will or intention for their own perfection or for the perfection of the cosmos, nor do they have any intention for the lack of it.

Causal relations connect them with each other to such an extent that it has brought about this wonderful design, and in this sense, each of them has a share in the establishment of this design, but not in the sense of having an intention or will in relation to it, and not in the sense that the design is imposed on them by compulsion or force (jabri).

There are more precise discussions regarding the attribution of will and purpose to God, the Exalted, which, God willing, will be treated in the discussions of theology.

1. This definition will be explained in Lesson Fifty-Five.

Part 5: The Material And The Immaterial

Lesson 41: The Material and the Immaterial
Lesson 42: What is Location?
Lesson 43: What is Time?
Lesson 44: Kinds of Substances

Lesson 45: Continuation of the Discussion of the Kinds of Substance
Lesson 46: Matter and Form
Lesson 47: Accidents
Lesson 48: Quality
Lesson 49: The Reality of Knowledge
Lesson 50: The Union of the Knower and the Known

Lesson 41: The Material and the Immaterial

Introduction

Philosophers have propounded preliminary divisions for all existents, among which is the distinction between necessary existence and contingent existence. Considering the fact that this distinction is made with regard to the relation between whatness and existence (necessity and contingency are obtained from the 'matter' of the proposition in the form of a 'simple question' [e.g., of the form 'x exists']), it is more compatible with the doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness.

On the basis of the fundamentality of existence, all existence may be divided into the independent and the relational (rabit), or the self-sufficient (ghani, literally rich) and the poor (faqir). That is, if an existent has absolutely no need of another and, in technical terms, is an 'existent by itself' (mawjud bi nafsih), it is self-sufficient and independent, and otherwise it is poor and relational.

It is clear that what is meant by self-sufficiency and independence are absolute self-sufficiency and absolute independence; otherwise, every cause possesses a relative self-sufficiency and independence in relation to its own effect.

It is self-evident that there are poor and relational existents, or contingent existence, which are concomitant with being effects, but that there is a self- sufficient and absolutely independent existent or a Necessary Existence in Itself (bi al-dhat) which is concomitant with the First Cause is established by proof, a proof which was indicated in the discussions on cause and effect, and in the discussions of theology there will be further explanation of this.

Likewise, philosophers have divided the whatnesses of contingent existents into two groups: substance and accident. They have called a whatness that is not in need of a subject in order to become an existent a 'substance,' and that which needs a subject, or in other words, a state or attribute for another existent, is called an 'accident.'

It was previously indicated that it is well known among philosophers that accidental whatnesses,

according to induction, possess nine higher genera, and with the addition of substance, this makes ten categories. It seems that the concepts of substance and accident are secondary philosophical intelligibles which are obtained by comparing existents with each other.

For example, when one compares the existence of the states of one's soul (not their whatnesses) with the existence of the soul (not with its whatness) he sees that the occurrence of passive qualities, such as fear, hope, happiness and sadness, etc., depends on the existence of the soul, so that on the assumption of the absence of the existence of the soul, no room remains for their existence.

This is opposed to the existence of the soul, which does not need them and can also occur without them. In view of this comparison, existents are divided into two groups. The first group is called 'accident' and the second group is called 'substance.'

If one equates the concept of substance with 'non-accident,' one can divide all existents into substances and accidents so that the Necessary Existent, Blessed and Exalted, may also be considered an instance of substance, as with some Western philosophers. In this way the above-mentioned division will be a primary division. But Islamic philosophers divide contingent existence into substance and accident. For this reason they do not consider the application of substance to the Necessary Existent in Itself to be correct.

On the other hand, some Western philosophers have expressed some doubts about the existence of substance. For example, Berkeley denied the existence of corporeal substance, and Hume had doubts about the substance of the soul, as well. However, those who accept the existence of objective accidents and have denied the existence of their substances have unwittingly accepted the existence of many sorts of substance in place of one sort of substance. For example, in case the phenomena of the soul are not considered accidents of the soul, they will not need any subject, and in this case each of them will be a particular substance.

Likewise, if the attributes of bodies are not considered accidents in need of a subject, inevitably they themselves will become corporeal substances. For what is meant by being a substance is nothing more than that the existence of a contingent existence does not need a subject.

Along with these divisions one can consider another general and primary division for all existents, and that is the division between the immaterial (mujarrad) and the material; that is, entified existence is either corporeal and possessing corporeal attributes, in which case it is called material, or it is not of this class and is called 'immaterial.'

This classification is not specific to contingent existence, for one of its classes, the immaterial, includes the Necessary Existent. Likewise, it is not specific to substance or accident, for both the immaterial and the material can be substance or accident. For example, souls and completely immaterial things are non-material substances, and bodies are in the class of material substances, and qualities of the soul are immaterial accidents while sensible qualities are material accidents.

In this Part, we are considering this very classification, and after explaining the concepts of its categories we will state their general characteristics, and then we will set out to explain their sub-categories and the principles of these. In addition, we will also take up the discussion of substance and accident.

The Meaning of 'Immaterial' and 'Material'

The term mujarrad (immaterial) is the passive participle of tajrid meaning 'to be stripped,' and this meaning brings to mind the idea that something which has clothing or a skin is peeled and made naked. But in philosophical terminology this term is used as the opposite of 'material,' and what is meant is an existent which does not have the characteristics of material things, and there is no intention here to indicate that something was previously material and that it was stripped of this state or of anything else and it actually means 'immaterial.'

Hence, in order to understand its exact meaning, the meaning of the term 'material' must first be clarified. Considering that this term is related to 'matter' (maddah), we must explain the meaning of the term 'matter.'

The meaning of maddah (matter) is etymologically 'helper' (madad konandeh) and 'extender' (imtidad dehandeh), and as a scientific term is employed in several senses.

1. Logicians call the quality of the relation between the subjects and predicate of a proposition with regard to reality (necessity, contingency, impossibility) the 'matter' [mode] of the proposition.

2. Also, the propositions which constitute a syllogism, disregarding their form and structure, are called the matter of the syllogism.

3. In physics 'matter' is used for an existent which possesses specific attributes such as mass, attraction and repulsion, friction, etc., and it is used as the opposite of 'force' or 'energy.'

4. In philosophy, 'matter' is used for an existent which is the ground for the appearance of another existent, as soil is the ground for the appearance of plants and animals. Hence, the philosophical meaning of this term comprises the meaning of relation, and it is close to the meaning of 'mayeh' (stuff) in Farsi.

Philosophers call the first stuff of all corporeal existents 'the matter of matters' or 'hayula ula' (prime matter),[1] and there are differences of opinion about its reality. Aristotelians hold that prime matter has no actuality of its own, and its reality is nothing more than potentiality and capacity for corporeal actualities. A discussion of this will come later.

In conclusion, the term 'material' in the terminology of philosophy is used for things related to the matter of the cosmos, and for them to be existents requires a prior matter or stuff, and sometimes it is used in a general sense which includes matter itself. With regard to usage, it is approximately equivalent to

corporeal (jismani). The word mujarrad means immaterial and incorporeal, that is, a thing that is neither a body nor an attribute or characteristic of a body.

Characteristics of Corporeal and Immaterial Beings

Body is defined in various ways, the most famous of which are the following:

1. Body is a substance possessing three dimensions (length, width and depth). More precisely, it may be said that it is a substance in which three intersecting lines may be supposed such that the angles formed by the intersection of the three lines are right angles. The expression 'supposed' is added in order to include things like the sphere, for although there are actually no such lines in the sphere, such lines can be supposed in it, as one can bring about such lines by cutting the sphere.

2. It is narrated that the theologians (mutakallimin) defined body as a substance which occupies space, in technical terms shaghil hayyiz (occupier of a domain).

3. In defining it, Shaykh al-Ishraq (Suhravardi) says: It is a substance which can be the object of sensible ostension.

There have been discussions about these definitions and whether any of them is a logically complete definition (hadd tam mantiqi), but it is not necessary to mention them.

In any case, the clearest characteristic of body is its extension in three dimensions, and this characteristic has various implications, including that bodies are, mentally, infinitely divisible in three directions. Another is that bodies have locations, but not in the sense of spaces independent of bodies by which they are filled, but in the sense that will be explained in the discussion of location.

Third is that such existents are naturally capable of being objects of sensible ostension, for sensible ostension is performed with regard to location, and whatever has a location can be the object of sensible ostension. Finally, corporeal existents possess a fourth dimension which is called 'time,' and the discussion of the reality of time will also be forthcoming.

Corporeality and materiality, in the specific meaning which does not include body and matter themselves, are subordinate to the existence of bodies. In other words, they are things which do not occur independently of bodies. Their most important characteristic is that they, as subjects to body, are divisible.

Therefore, the soul belonging to the body, which in one sense is united with it, is not corporeal, for even though it is subject to the body it is not divisible. On the contrary, attributes and accidents of bodies such as color and shape, which are subject to the body, are divisible. Hence, they are considered corporeal things.

With regard to the characteristics of bodies and corporeality, their opposites can be delineated as the characteristics of immaterial things; that is, immaterial entities cannot be divided, and they have no location in space or time. There is only one sort of immaterial entity to which a spatial or temporal location may be related by accident, and that is the spirit belonging to a body. That is, one can say: the spirit is in the place where the body is, and the time that the body is existent is the same time when its spirit is existent.

However, this possession of a location and possession of a time are really attributes of the body, and as a result of the association and union of the spirit with the body, loosely speaking and metaphorically one also may relate these to the spirit.

It is to be noted that the gnostics (‘urafa) and Illuminationist philosophers also proved that there is a third kind of existent which is an intermediary and barzakh2 between perfectly immaterial entities and purely material ones. They are called imaginal existents,3 and in the terminology of Sadr al–Muta’allihin and his followers, they are called imaginal and barzakhi immaterial entities, and likewise the term ‘imaginal bodies’ is sometimes applied to them. Further explanation of this will be given.

1. The Arabic hayula is derived from the Greek term for matter, hyle. [Tr.]
2. In Islamic eschatology, the barzakh, literally isthmus is the phase between death and resurrection. The term is also used for the imaginal world that stands as an isthmus between the physical and the transcendent domains. [Tr.]
3. The term mithal is also used for the Platonic Ideals or Forms. Suhravardi uses the same term, which literally means ‘example’ or ‘similitude’, for that which is seen in visions or dreams. [Tr.]

Lesson 42: What is Location?

Introduction

The discussion of time and space is among the most important problems of philosophy which has always attracted the attention of thinkers and philosophers, and it has always retained its freshness and vivacity, and has never become stale or faded. It has not yet been filed away.

Although geniuses in Eastern and Western philosophy have thought and spoken at length about time and space, and among them the great Eastern philosopher, Ibn Sina has spilled much ink over the details of this subject in the Physics of his Shifa, yet there remains room for profound thinking, research and inquiries in its interstices.

The opinions of philosophers and authorities concerning time and space are so opposed and contrary to one another and include weird ideas to such an extent that few philosophical problems can be compared to it.

For example, on the one hand, time and space are considered to be immaterial substances; while on the other hand, they have been degraded to such an extent that they are considered illusory and imaginary. Kant, the famous German philosopher, considered them to be mental, or in his own terms 'forms of sensibilities.' Most philosophers, however, have considered them to be objective accidents.

In this regard, the great Islamic philosopher, Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi has won the race against all of them and has presented a very important and firm view which can be considered the last word on the subject. This view may also be considered a basis for establishing substantial motion, the philosophical explanation of which at the very least is one of the major original innovations of this great philosopher, as will be made clear in future chapters.

In view of the fact that in the previous lesson the occupation of space and time has been discussed as properties of material things, we have seen fit here to present an explanation pertaining to space and time.

The Problem of Space and Time

In all languages there are expressions for space and time, and all people believe that material things are related to space and time, which relations can be stated in various ways: "The sun is in the sky," "The sea is where fish live," "The book is on the table," and so forth. Likewise, it is said: "The honorable Prophet of Islam, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, was born in the sixth century. During his time, wars took place between Muslims and infidels." "Yesterday, school was closed," and so on.

In general, the common understanding is that all bodies occupy space. Rather, most people generalize this judgment and imagine that there is no existent without a place, as the simple minded imagine that God the Almighty also has a place in the heavens or beyond them, which, of course, is not correct, and this will be discussed further at the appropriate place. The very same line of thought is also applied to time and its relations to things and phenomena.

Naturally, the philosopher who would know and make known the realities of things also must answer this question: "What is the reality of space and time?", especially since one encounters these concepts in many of the problems of philosophy, such as in the previous lesson where space and time were introduced as properties of material things, and in the discussions of theology we deny that God the Exalted occupies space or time.

The first difficulty which exists with regard to the explanation of the reality of space and time, and turns this explanation into a formidable problem, is that space and time cannot be experienced by the senses and they never fall into the traps of our sensory organs. They are not seen by the eye, nor touched, nor are they perceived by any other sense, although sensible things are related to them such that they are considered to be of the sensible material world.

It is because of precisely this aspect that Kant presented them as mental channels for knowledge of entified phenomena, and not as objective entified things themselves; and another group of thinkers considered them to be illusory and imaginary. On the other hand, a group of philosophers who could not deny their objective existence, and who also could not believe them to be material existents, held that they are immaterial things.

Finally, most philosophers have considered them to be material accidents whose existences are established through the joint effort of the senses and reason. Naturally, each group advanced a reason or reasons for its own view, and criticized the reasons of the others. Sadr al-Muta'allihin affirms the view about space which is attributed to Plato, that is, space is immaterial, although there is room for doubt about the veracity of this attribution to Plato and it needs to be researched further.

It is obvious that this work is no place for a review of all the positions and a criticism of all the relevant reasons. Therefore, we will confine ourselves to a mention of the most famous positions, and an explanation of the view we affirm.

The Difference between 'Space' and 'Spatial Location' and between 'Time' and 'Temporal Location'

Before discussing the reality of place and time, it is necessary to bear in mind this point, that philosophers differentiate between space or place (makan) and spatial location or where ('ayn), and likewise between the concepts of time (zaman) and temporal location or when (mata). The concepts of whereness and whenness are considered to be relative, obtained by relating a thing to a place and time.

In the Aristotelian table of categories they are placed among the seven relative accidental categories, although it seems that basically these kinds of concepts must not be considered whatish concepts or categories. The reason for this becomes clear with regard to the characteristics of the kinds of concepts explained in Lesson Fifteen.

In any case, the Aristotelians believed that both the concept of where and when are independent whatish concepts and specific categories and have no relation to the whatness of time and space. Others have also had no doubt that though these kinds of concepts are brought about in relation to time and space, they are different from the concepts of space and time.

For this reason, one should be careful not to confuse discussions about space and time with those about these relational concepts.

The Reality of Space

Regarding the whatness of space, a few positions have been reported which are quite weak and not worth discussing, and no famous philosophers has held them. For example, there is the position that

space consists of the prime matter of bodies or their forms or actualities, or that it is an independent corporeal area in which the cosmos is contained.

Among the positions, two are quite famous: one, which is attributed to Plato, has been affirmed by some Islamic sages, such as Sadr al-Muta'allihin; while the other is attributed to Aristotle, and it has been accepted by the majority of Islamic sages, including Farabi and Ibn Sina. The view attributed to Plato is that, space is a substantival immaterial dimension which is identical to the volume of the cosmos.

This position seems strange because an immaterial existent, even if an imaginal form which is barzakhi, has no relation to material existents, and cannot be considered a locus for them. However, there is a strong possibility that a mistake has been made in the narration or translation of this position, or that what is meant here by the term immaterial (mujarrad) is not the technical sense.

This view is supported by the fact that Mir Damad has denied that Plato held this position.[1] According to this conjecture, one may interpret the position to claim that space is the volume of the cosmos considered separately from it (and in this sense is 'abstracted' from the cosmos).

As for the view reported to have been held by Aristotle, it is held that space is the inner surface of a body which makes contact with the outer surface of another body, like the inner surface of a glass which makes contact with the outer surface of the water contained in it.

There is a difficulty with this position. If we suppose that a fish is standing in a flowing river, without a doubt, the surface of water in contact with the surface of its body is always changing, and so, according to the position mentioned above, we must say that its space is constantly changing, although we assumed that it was standing still in its own place and that there has been no change in its space.

Another precise point which must be taken into consideration is that the above-mentioned definition is composed of two basic concepts. One is the inner surface of a containing body, and the other is contact with the outer surface of the contained body. However, 'surface' is a kind of amount and thus belongs to the category of quantity, while contact, according to the Aristotelians, is of the category of relation, and by combining these two categories a third category cannot be brought about.

In addition, contact is an accidental state for the mentioned surface, and for this reason cannot be the difference by which its essence is defined. In this way, it would have to be considered a special kind of category of continuous quantity. In any case, the question of the category to which space belongs remains unanswered.

It seems that the concept of space is not a non-relational concept (mafahim-e nafsi) such as man, animal, color and shape, but rather it is an accidental concept which includes a sense of relation to a thing which has a space. In order to obtain this concept, two things must be compared to each other from a specific point of view so that one may be considered the space of the other. This shows that space is not a kind of whatish concept included in the categories, but rather is a respectival concept.

Secondly, in order to consider something as the space of another it is not necessary to take into account its particular whatness or substance. For example, when we consider a glass as the space of some water, it is not because its body is made of crystal, and when we call water the space of a fish, it is not because it is a liquid composed of oxygen and hydrogen, but because it has the capacity to contain a thing which has a space, and that which in reality is taken into account is its being a container, not its substance.

Regarding these two points, one may say that when some of the volume of the cosmos is considered separately, and it is compared with a body contained in it, the mentioned volume will be its space.

It must be noted that sometimes space is applied to a quantity of volume which is greater than the capacity of the thing related to it, as when a house or a city is said to be the space of a person. Giving heed to this point, philosophers have said that these are not 'true spaces.' It is to be concluded that the true space of every thing is the amount of volume of the cosmos which is equivalent to the volume of the body related to a space insofar as it contains it.

Among the conclusions obtained from this philosophical analysis is that space is subordinate to the cosmos, and space does not exist prior to the appearance of or with the annihilation of the latter. Hence, one cannot consider the volume and surface of a thing to be independent existents which must have been created independently.

Rather, basically such concepts as volume and surface are representatives of aspects of corporeal existence which the mind separates from bodies. For this reason one can consider these kinds of cases, which are accidents, as aspects of the existence of material substances. Careful study of this subject makes clear why space is specific to bodies and may be considered a property of material existents, for the source of their abstraction is nothing but the volume of bodies.

1. Cf., Qabasat, p. 164.

Lesson 43: What is Time?

Discussion about the Reality of Time

Strange positions have also been reported regarding the reality of time, to which Ibn Sina has referred in the Physics of his Shifa. However, it seems that the solution of the problem of time was easier for Muslim philosophers than the problem of space, for they are almost entirely in agreement that time is a kind of continuous quantity characterized by instability and which by means of motion becomes an accident of bodies.

In this way, the position of time in the Aristotelian table of categories becomes perfectly clear. Sadr al-Muta'allihin has also presented this explanation in numerous places, but in the final analysis of the problem of motion, he states a new view which is especially important.

No matter how clear the explanation of time given by the philosophers is, if one is precise about it one will encounter ambiguous and questionable points which require deep thought. Perhaps it is these which attracted the fine and insightful attention of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, and led him to present a new theory of time.

In order to explain these points something must be mentioned about the principles of the philosophers related to this question, even though this is not really the place to discuss and research them.

Philosophers normally introduce motion as an 'accident,' but do not explain this any further. Only some of them have regarded it as of the category of 'that which acts' or 'that which is acted upon.' Shaykh al-Ishraq considered it to be an independent category alongside substance, quantity, quality and relation.

In this way, he limited the number of categories to five, and he considered the others as types of relation. Perhaps one may infer from the words of other philosophers that they have not considered motion itself to be among the categories.

Another principle is that motion is confined to four categories (quantity, quality, position, and place), and they consider transferal to be a motion in the category of place. They imagined that motion in the other categories, including substance, was impossible. Therefore, motion, considered to be an intermediary between bodies and time, was inevitably taken to be motion in one of the four categories of accidents.

On the other hand, all of them accepted the theory of the ninefold celestial sphere as axiomatic, and they related the appearance of time to the circular rotation of the highest firmament. This point is also presented in some places by Sadr al-Muta'allihin.

Regarding these principles and points, questions may be raised about the famous definitions of time, among the most important of which are the following:

1. There is no doubt that time is extended and divisible, and hence is considered to be a kind of quantity or to possess a kind of quantity, but why should it be considered as a quantity of motion?

The simple answer which is given to this question is that time is flowing and not fixed, such that not even two moments of it coexist, and necessarily one part of it must pass before the following part may come into existence. This sort of quantity can only be related to something which is inherently flowing and not fixed, and that would be nothing other than motion.

As was indicated, this answer depends on the fact that gradualness, flux and instability are particular to motion, a motion which is presumed to be specified to the four categories of accidents, and for this reason they deny the possibility that time could be a quantity for corporeal substance. But is this doctrine

correct? If it is supposed that there were no accidental motion in the world, would there then be no room for the concept of motion?

2. Motion is an intermediary between bodies and time, but what kind of intermediary is it? Is it a fixed intermediary (wasitah dar thubut),[1] from which it could be concluded that bodies themselves really possess time by means of motion, or is it an accidental intermediary (wasitah dar ʻurudh), such that bodies themselves never really possess time? In other words, is the attribution of corporeal substance to time an accidental characterization (ittisaf bil–ʻaradh)?

Perhaps the answer which must be given on the basis of the principles [of the mentioned philosophers] to this question is to accept the second alternative. But is it correct to accept that bodies themselves do not possess time, regardless of their continuous and gradual changes? If we suppose that all changes are instantaneous but successive, will there be no precedence and posteriority among them?

Let us assume that they consider motion to be a fixed intermediary and that the true attribution of possessing time by bodies is considered to be posterior to the occurrence of motion. This assumption implies that bodies essentially have the capacity for the attribution of this quantity which results from motion, although prior to the occurrence of motion bodies do not have this attribution actually.

Before it takes the form of a ball or cube, wax has such a capability, for it possesses extension and volume. However, the ancient philosophers did not see any way for the influence of flux and motion in the essences of bodies, so how could they accept the attribution to such existents of an attribute which is flux and instability itself?

This is just like the case in which we want to relate line, surface and volume, even if by means of a cause, to an abstract existent which lacks extension, in a way that these qualities will really be attributed to it!

3. Another question is what kind of relation is that between motion and time? Is motion the cause for the appearance of time, as so many of the philosophers seem to hold, or is it merely that which serves as the subject of the accidental attribution of time? In any case, in what category should motion itself be included? How is its attribution to time to be determined?

It was previously indicated that some of the philosophers, such as Shaykh al– Ishraq, considered motion to be an independent category of accidents. Others considered motion to be two–sided: they considered the side related to its agent [i.e., the mover] to be in the category of that which acts and they considered the side related to its object, the moved, to be in the category of that which is acted upon.

Other philosophers have given no clear explanation. In any case, the answer to this part of the question requires greater precision. However, the application of cause and effect to motion and time may be considered a kind of development of the terminology of causality, similar to what was indicated in Lesson Thirty–Seven.

4. Another question which can be raised is that if the standard for relating time to motion is its essential instability, this is found in all motions; so why do the philosophers relate time to the rotation of the Sphere of Atlas [the highest of the celestial spheres of traditional cosmology]?

And if there were no Sphere of Atlas or it had no motion, would the other phenomena of the cosmos not posses temporal priority or posteriority? And basically, how can an accident which depends on its own subject are considered the realm for other things and phenomena?

To this question an answer may be given in the following form: The time whose appearance is related by philosophers to the highest sphere is continuous and perpetual, or in other words, absolute time. This does not contradict the claim that every specific phenomenon has its own limited and specific time.

What is meant by saying that the time associated with the celestial spheres is a realm for the occurrences of other events is nothing more than that the temporal extension of each of the events corresponds to a part of the temporal extension of the motion of the celestial sphere.

We know that 'this house is ruined from its very foundations,' for the hypothesis of the celestial spheres has been falsified and has lost its credibility.

With the raising of these questions and the attempts to answer them it has become clear that the problem of time cannot be solved as easily as was first imagined, and the theory popular amongst the philosophers is not convincing.

Now the time has come to explain the discovery of Sadr al-Muta'allihin in this regard.

The Theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin

With the acceptance of the positive points previously made pertaining to time, Sadr al-Muta'allihin removed the weak points and compensated for the deficiencies and shortcomings in the theories of the ancient philosophers. In conclusion, he presents a new view that solves the problem of time and the problem of substantial motion simultaneously. Truly, this must be considered one of his most valuable innovations in philosophy.

The positive points [he accepted from the ancient philosophers] are the following:

1. Time is extended and divisible and in one sense is a quantity.

2. Time and motion have a close and inseparable relation, and no motion occurs without time, as, likewise, the occurrence of time without the existence of a sort of continuous gradual motion and alteration is impossible. This is because the passage of the successive parts of time is itself a kind of gradual alteration (motion) for the time-bound thing.

The weak points he found in the views of the ancient philosophers which he tried to compensate for are

the following:

1. The ancient philosophers considered time and motion to be accidents external to things, whereas in Sadr al-Muta'allihin's view they are analytic accidents (awaridh tahlili), and it is not the case that they may be considered to have existences removed from that of their subjects, but, rather, it is only in the realm of mental analysis that attribute and object of attribution, accident and its object are separable from each other. Otherwise, in the objective realm there is no more than one existence.

2. The philosophers confined motion to accidents, and for this reason they denied that there is an immediate relation of time to bodies, while the most basic motion must be considered motion in substances, for it is impossible that something whose whatness is without a transient extension should be characterized by a transient quantity by means of something else, as will be explained in the discussion of motion. Hence, time must be directly related to the things themselves, and it will be counted as their fourth dimension.[2]

It follows that according to the theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, time is a transient extended dimension of every corporeal existent, which is to be added to the non-transient spatial dimensions (length, width, and depth).

His answer to the first of the four questions mentioned above is that time is combined with substantial motion which is the very existence of bodies, and it is not confined to accidental motion.

His answer to the second question would be that time and motion do not have a double existence so that one can be considered the cause of the appearance of the other, and so that we may imagine that bodies are related to time by means of motion external to their essences, and so that there may be room for a question regarding the quality of this mediation.

In their whatness and substances, bodies have both a true attribution of motion and transformation and a true attribution of time and transience. Just as spatial extension is an aspect of their existence, temporal extension is another aspect of their existence, as well.

His answer to the question about the category to which motion belongs is that motion is not a whatish concept or category, but it is an intellectual concept which is abstracted from the nature of material existence, as the concept of stability is derived from the nature of the existence of immaterial things. Just as stability is not something which is objectively an accident of immaterial and stable things, neither is motion an objective accident of material existents. It is the human mind which analyzes existence into essence and attribute, accident and its object.

Likewise, his answer to the question about the quality time has, of being a realm for events, is clear, for time is not an independent realm for things and phenomena, so that is has a separate existence and temporal things are contained in it. Rather, like the volume of a body, it is an essential and internal characteristic of body, and naturally, every phenomenon will possess a specific time for itself which is

considered to be an aspect of its existence.

At the most, to determine precedence and posteriority of things in relation to each other, a longer temporal extension must be taken into consideration, and the temporal position of each of them is to be determined through a comparison with other times. If the celestial spheres exist, whose temporal extension is greater than that of any other existent, and then they would be able to play this role.

If they do not exist (as in fact they do not), the very temporal extension of the entire corporeal world will be the standard for determining the temporal positions of particular phenomena, as the volume of the entire world is the standard for determining the spatial positions of particular phenomena.

The similarity and harmony of time and space become clearer with this explanation along with the profundity of the interpretation given for space.

An Explanation of Some Points

1. The expression 'instant' (an), which is employed in ordinary language for a tiny part of time, in philosophical terminology means the extremity of a fragment of time, similar to a point in relation to a line.

A line is infinitely divisible, and each part of it also will have extension, even if our minds cannot imagine extremely short extensions, so just as a point is never reached by dividing a line, each part of time, no matter how small it is assumed to be, will have an extension, and an instant will never be reached by dividing time. Therefore, the composition of time by successive instants is no more than an illusion.

2. The expression 'aeon' (dahr), which in ordinary language has the meaning of a long time, in philosophy means something like a container for immaterial things, as opposed to time (zaman) which is taken to be a container for material things.

In reality, aeon [in the sense of perpetuity] indicates the lack of temporal extension of immaterial things. Likewise, the expression 'eternity' (sarmad) is specific to the divine station which indicates the transcendence of the Sacred Divine Existence over the attributes of all created things.

Likewise, these two expressions [dahr and sarmad] are used in contrast to the relation of where (mata), and for this reason it is said that the relation of immaterial to material things is the aeon (dahr), and the relation of divine station to created things is eternity (sarmad). It is also said that God the Exalted has an eternal priority (taqaddum sarmadi) to all creatures, and that the immaterial things have a perpetual priority (taqaddum dahri) over material things.

3. The ancient philosophers, who considered time to be an implication of motion in accidents, took the substances of bodies, and even more certainly the substances of the celestial spheres, to be beyond the scope of time, although they believed in their perpetuity coextensive with time.

However, regarding substantial motion and the influence of time and its passage on the essences of material existents, these [material existents] must be considered without exception to be temporal.

4. Temporal priority and posteriority are particular to events which exist in time. They themselves will also have temporal extension. However, existents which are beyond the scope of time and which possess an existential permanence are unchanging and nontransient and will not have a temporal priority or posteriority with relation to temporal things.

Rather, in reality, their existence encompasses temporal things, and past, present and future are equal in relation to them. For the same reason, it is said that events are scattered over the surface of time, and are collected in the container of perpetuity (dahr), 'Separate things in the container of time (zaman) are collected in the container of perpetuity (dahr).'

1. A fixed intermediary is one which is applied or fixed directly to an object, as opposed to an accidental intermediary which is applied indirectly to an object because of some accidental feature or association of the object with something else. Motion is a fixed intermediary between time and bodies if the body in motion is in direct relation to time; otherwise motion is an accidental intermediary and the relation of body to time is indirect and accidental. [Tr.]
2. It must be noted that 'the fourth dimension' in philosophical terminology is different from its meaning in the physics of Einstein's theory.

Lesson 44: Kinds of Substances

Theories about the Kinds of Substances

There are differences of opinion among philosophers about the kinds of material and immaterial substances. The Peripatetics divided substances into five types:

1. Intellectual substances are completely immaterial, and in addition to having no spatial or temporal dimensions by nature, they are not attached to any material or corporeal existents.

It must be noted that the application of 'intellect' to such existents is unrelated to intellect in the sense of the power which perceives universal concepts, and the employment of the term 'intellect' regarding completely immaterial substances is a sort of homonymity, as is the employment of 'intellect' by scholars of ethics in yet a third sense.

2. Psychic substances are essentially immaterial, but are attached to bodies (corporeal existents), and without a body they have no possibility of coming about, although it is possible that after coming about their attachment to a body may be cut off, and after the death of the body they may persist.

3. Corporeal substances have spatial and temporal dimensions, and we sense their appearances in the

form of accidents of color and shape, while we prove their existences by reason. The Peripatetics considered every corporeal substance to be composed of two other substances by the name of ‘matter’ and ‘form.’

4. Matter or hayula is also an indefinite substance without actuality according to the Peripatetics. It exists in all bodies, including the celestial spheres and the elements. However, the matter of each celestial sphere takes its own specific form, and for this reason, as they speculated, generation and corruption, and tearing and mending are impossible for them.

However, elemental matter takes different kinds of forms (except for that of the celestial spheres), and in this regard the world of elements is the world of alterations and transformations, of generation and corruption.

5. Form is the aspect of actuality for every corporeal existent and is the source of the particular effects of every kind of matter. There are various kinds of forms, and among them is the form of corporeality which exists in all corporeal substances and is inseparable from hayula.

There are other forms which also occur successively concomitant with the form of corporeality in the different types of corporeal things and are capable of change, transformation, generation and corruption, such as the elemental forms, mineral forms, vegetable forms and animal forms.

On the other hand, Shaykh al-Ishraq denied the existence of hayula as a substance without actuality as a part of corporeal substance. He took the form of corporeality to be the corporeal substance itself and he accepted other elemental, mineral and vegetable forms as accidents of corporeal substance.

Of the five kinds of substances posited by the Peripatetics, he accepted only three (intellectual substance, psychic substance and corporeal substance), but he also attested to another kind of existent as an intermediary between the completely immaterial and the purely material by the name of ‘immaterial phantoms’ (ashbah mujarradah) or ‘suspended forms’ (suwar mu’allaqah) which he later introduced in the terminology of more recent philosophers as ‘imaginal’ (mithali) or ‘intermediary’ (barzakhi) substance.

Earlier it was mentioned that Berkeley denied the existence of corporeal substances and consequently, matter and material forms. He believed that what we perceive as material things are really forms which God the Exalted has brought into existence in our psychic world, and that their realities are psychic realities, and that there exists no material world beyond the soul.

It was also mentioned that Hume also considered psychic substance to be doubtful and announced that we can only decisively prove psychic phenomena (accidents), for these are the only things which can be directly experienced.

Corporeal Substances

In Lesson Twenty–Three we proved the existence of a material reality, and it was explained that it is incorrect to imagine that the material world exists only in the psychic world and in the realm of man's perception, for by means of presentational knowledge man finds that he does not bring sensible forms into existence himself.

Hence, there is no other alternative but that they are brought about by a cause external to him which somehow influences his sensory perceptions. The hypothesis that God the Exalted made these perceptual forms to appear in our souls without intermediary—as was held by Berkeley—is also an incorrect assumption, because the relations between an immaterial agent and all souls and all times and places are equal.

Hence, the appearance of specific phenomena at a definite time without the mediation of preparatory agents and specific temporal and spatial conditions cannot take place, although the entire world of being is the creation of God the Exalted, and He is the only one who gives being to existents, as will be explained in the proper place.

Moreover, with the denial of the existence of matter, no room remains for the soul as a substance attached to matter, and it would have to be considered an intellectual substance and a completely immaterial thing, while completely immaterial things cannot be the objects of accidents or of alterations.

It is to be concluded that the belief in a material world, in addition to being spontaneous (irtikazi) and in a sense 'innate' (fitri), is also necessitated by rational proof. In this regard, some Western thinkers have proclaimed that what is provable about the material world is only those accidents which may be the objects of sense experience, and that corporeal substance is not provable.

For example, when an apple is the object of sense perception, by means of the eyes we see its color and shape, we smell its fragrance, by touching it we perceive its smoothness, and by eating it, its taste, but there is no sense by which we perceive that there is something called the substance of apple, the locus of its accidents, in addition to the color, shape, smell, taste and things like that.

In retort to them it must be said that although we do not have a sense for perceiving substance, by reason itself we understand that objective existents are either accidents or substances, where by accident is meant a state or attribute for something else, something that needs a subject to which the attribute applies, while a substance is something which does not need an objective subject of attribution.

Hence, if that which relates to sense perceptions is an accident, inevitably it will be in need of a substantial subject, and if it does not need a subject, then it itself will be a substance. In any case, there is no rational alternative to accepting the existence of material substance. However, it is another matter to identify objective substances and accidents which we presently have no intention to investigate.

Psychic Substances

In Lesson Thirteen we mentioned that presentational knowledge of the soul is the same as the existence of the soul itself, and that every human being possesses this knowledge to a greater or lesser extent. But this knowledge has degrees, and at the beginning a weak level occurs, which correlates with the weakness of the existence of the soul. For this reason, it is not an object of awareness.

Gradually, a weak awareness of it appears, but not to the extent that a clear mental interpretation of it may be formed. For this reason it is confused with the body. The more the existence of the soul is perfected, and the level of its immateriality is raised, the more its awareness of itself will be increased until it reaches the point that it becomes clear that it is an immaterial substance which is independent of the body.

However, such knowledge will be obtained by none but those who advance through levels of spiritual perfection. Therefore, the majority of people are in need of proof to obtain conscious knowledge of the immateriality of the soul.

There are various ways to prove the immateriality of the soul, the examination of which merits an independent book of its own. Among them there are reasons given from dreams, the summoning of spirits, hypnotism, and likewise from the works of yogis, miracles of the friends of God (awliya), and such things. Some of their premises are established by reports for those who do not have direct information of such things, and in truth these sorts of reports are corroborated way beyond what is required for credibility.

Another group of reasons makes use of premises which must be proven in the empirical sciences, especially psychology and biology, such as the premise that all organs and cells of the body are gradually replaced, and even the cells of the brain are altered as a result of dissolution and nourishment with fresh material, while the soul has a fixed individual existence which survives through dozens of years, and every man is aware of his own individual identity.

Purely philosophical arguments for the immateriality of the soul are also divided into two groups: one group of arguments are those which are obtained by the analysis of ordinary knowledge by presence; the other group of arguments first establish the immateriality of psychic phenomena such as perception, will and affection, then they prove the immateriality of their subject, the soul.

Since we will discuss the immateriality of the qualities of the soul in the future, especially the immateriality of knowledge and perception, here we will content ourselves with some arguments which directly establish the immateriality of the soul.

Two Proofs for the Immateriality of the Soul

1. Ibn Sina, in his Isharat, presents an argument for the immateriality of the soul that may be summarized as follows.

If one is placed in an environment in which his attention is not distracted by external things, and the condition of his body is such that he does not notice it, that is, he does not suffer from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, pain or any other discomfort, and even the weather is completely still so that the blowing of the wind does not attract his attention, and in the words of Ibn Sina, there is 'balmy weather,' in such a situation if one focuses one's attention on oneself, that is, on the 'I, the perceiver,' so that one has no attention on anything corporal, he will find his soul, while he will not find any of his bodily organs. What he finds is different from what he does not find, and hence the soul is other than the material body.

This argument, as we have considered it, is an aid to enable the mind to have a correct interpretation of presentational knowledge of the soul. The conditions mentioned by Ibn Sina are really a guide for the common man to be able to focus his attention so that material factors do not attract his attention to the body and things related to it.

It was previously indicated that those who are advanced in the stages of spiritual perfection are able to turn their own attention completely toward the soul and to observe the reality of it, but the common man must observe such conditions in order to divert his attention from material things to some extent.

2. Another argument for the immateriality of the soul is that when we pay precise attention to our own existence, the 'I, the perceiver,' we see that the existence of 'I' is a simple indivisible thing. For example, it cannot be divided into two 'half I's,' while the most fundamental characteristic of body is divisibility, as was explained in Lesson Forty–One. However, such a characteristic cannot be found in the soul, and it is not subject to the body in being divisible.

So, there is no other alternative but its immateriality. The most that can be said is that the soul is attached to the body and has a special existential relation to it, so that it influences the body, as the body moves with the will of the soul, and it is affected by the body, as it suffers hunger and thirst and is influenced by and influences the body in many other ways that must be taken up in discussions of the mind– body problem.

Lesson 45: Continuation of the Discussion of

the Kinds of Substance

Intellectual Substance

The ancient philosophers took quite tortuous routes to establish the existence of intellectual substance. For example, they all resorted to the 'principle of the unit' (i.e., the unity of the effect given the unity of its direct cause) in order to prove the existence of the first intellect which is the most simple and most perfect of the contingent existents.

On the other hand, they introduced the active intellect as the proximate agent of the elemental world (i.e., the sublunary world), and they also presented it as that which emanates the intellectual concepts to man and to his treasury of intelligibles, and they mentioned various different ways to prove its existence.

Also, to prove the existence of the tenfold vertical intellect they sought the assistance of the hypothesis of nine celestial spheres. They imagined that the nine intellects were to be obtained as the proximate causes for the nine celestial spheres, and they also imagined these intellects to be the ends of the motions subject to the volitions of the souls of the spheres. These nine intellects together with the active intellect were taken to compose the ten intellects.

Likewise, the philosophers, in order for to establish the existence of the world of the intellects, and especially the Illuminationists (Ishraqiyyin), in order to establish the existence of the horizontal intellects (i.e., the Platonic Forms), relied upon the 'Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent' and they formulated various reasons for the validity of this doctrine. But, this is not the occasion for a review and criticism of their explanations and arguments.

However, by focusing on the fundamentality of existence, the graduated levels of existence and the reality of the causal relation, which are established in the philosophy of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, there emerges a simpler and at the same time more certain way to prove that there is a world of intellects which can be considered to be a new explanation of the doctrine of the nobler contingent.

Hence, first we will explain something about the above-mentioned doctrine, and then we shall describe the conclusions for the present discussion which may be drawn from it.

The Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent

The purport of this doctrine is that if we consider two contingent existents, one of which is nobler than the other, the nobler one must occur at a level prior to that of the less noble one, and the nobler must be the cause of the less noble. So, if the nobler is not known to us, we can discover it by means of the existence of the less noble.

The way this doctrine is used in the present discussion is as follows: intellectual substance is nobler than other substances, so, according to this doctrine, it must occur at a level prior to that of the others, so that there will be a means for their existences. Hence, the existence of other substances is a means to discover the existence of that which is at a prior level to them.

This doctrine came to be especially favored since the time of Shaykh al- Ishraq, and the following proof was used to establish it.

If the nobler existent does not exist at a prior level to the less noble, then it must be at the same level, a lower level, or not existing at all. If it existed at the same level—as, for example, if intellectual substance together with corporeal substance were produced by the first cause—then the 'principle of the unit' would be violated.

If the nobler existed at a posterior level—as, for example, if intellectual substance came into existence after corporeal substance, and corporeal substance were a means for the production of intellectual substance— this would imply that the existence of the cause were baser than the existence of its effect.

If it never came into existence at all, this would mean that something which has the capability to cause the nobler has no existence, that is, that the first cause would also lack the capability to create it! So, the only correct assumption is that the nobler existent exists at a level prior to the less noble and is a means for its production.

Later, this argument, which rests on the doctrine of the unit, was challenged and criticized by some, and defended by others, such as Mir Damad who offered other arguments in its defense, as well, the review of which is not appropriate here.

As we indicated, however, this doctrine may be more firmly established on the basis of the principles of the philosophy of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, as follows.

The causal relation between a cause and its effect is an essential and unalterable relation; that is, the existence of the effect is essentially dependent on the existence of the efficient cause, and it is impossible that the positions of cause and effect should be changed so that the existence of the cause should be dependent on the existence of the effect.

So, it is impossible that an effect should be produced by something on which it is not dependent. The causal relation is also a necessary relation, and it is impossible for the existential dependency of the effect on the cause to vanish, so that the effect could occur without the cause. Hence, the possibility of being an effect is equal to its necessity.

In other words, the causal relation between two existents can never be considered to be merely possible (imkan khass, the negation of the necessity of the terms of the relation), so that it is possible for one of the two existents both to be and not to be an effect of the other with neither of them being necessary.

So, if it is not impossible for one thing to be the effect of another, it will be necessary for it to be the effect of the other, and without the other it would not come into existence.

On the other hand, in the discussions of cause and effect it was established that the criterion for being an effect is weakness of existence. Therefore, this supposition will be necessary wherever a more perfect and more powerful existent can be supposed, so that the weaker existent may be considered to radiate from its existence, not being independent of it.

By attending to these two premises, the above-mentioned doctrine may be obtained as follows: If we suppose that there are a number of existents each of which is more powerful than another, so that the former may be considered the cause of the existence of the latter; in other words, if a special gradation is posited among them, then each of the more powerful existents will be at a prior level to the weaker existents, and necessarily will be the cause in relation to them, until one arrives at an existent for which it is impossible to suppose a more perfect one, and which cannot possibly be the effect of any of the other existents.

According to this doctrine, the existence of intellectual substance, which is more perfect than other substances and can be the cause for their existences, is established. This will be an intermediary between the level of infinite intensity of existence (i.e. God, the Exalted) and the lower levels of existence.

On this basis, the existence of horizontal intellects may also be established, that is, one can suppose a number of intellectual substances none of which is the cause of another of them, but each of which is the cause for a species of lower existents and merely possesses the perfection of that very species in a more perfect and simpler form.

Several points must be observed: one is that horizontal intellects will be the effects of one or several intellects more perfect than they, for an intellect may be supposed which possesses the perfections of all of them, and which stands in the chain of their causes. Earlier it was mentioned that the possibility of being a cause is equal to its necessity.

The second point is that none of the horizontal intellects will have a whatness common with the species of existent from which it is produced, for the abstraction of a whatness of a single species from different levels of existence is impossible. Even two intellectual substances which are taken to be vertically related so that one is the cause of the other will not have a single whatness.

The third point is that this doctrine is not capable of establishing the number of intellects, and there is no way to prove how many intermediaries exist between the first intellect and the horizontal intellects. Since the hypothesis of there being ten intellects is based on the hypothesis of there being nine celestial spheres, with the invalidity of the latter, the former also becomes invalid.

Imaginal Substance

As was mentioned in the previous lesson, the Illuminationists proved the existence of another world called the world of 'immaterial phantoms' (ashbah mujarradah) or of 'suspended forms' (suwar mu'allaqah), which is an intermediary between the intellectual world and the corporeal world, and in this regard, in the language of the later philosophers this was called the world of the isthmus (barzakh), or the imaginal world (alam-e mithal).

Probably the Illuminationists either were inspired to use this term by the mystics ('urafa), or they themselves found it through mystical disclosures. In religious texts some topics may be found, especially about the world of the isthmus and the questions of Nakir and Munkar[1] and the like which can be explained by means of the imaginal world.

It is necessary to note that Shaykh al-Ishraq does not use the term 'isthmus' (barzakh) for the imaginal world of forms, but applies this term to the material world. It is also to be mentioned that the expression mithal [image or form] is used for this world in a sense different from the Platonic Forms, for the latter are completely immaterial and a kind of intellectual substance, while imaginal substances are another kind of existent unlike intellectual substances, which are completely lacking in corporeal attributes and limits, and are unlike corporeal substances, which are divisible and possess location.

Rather, they are of the kind of imaginal forms which are drawn in the minds of men. For example, in order to halve them in the imagination, one must bring into existence two smaller forms in the mind, not that a larger form is to be divided into two halves.

Likewise, it must be kept in mind that expressions such as 'phantoms' regarding this world are not used in the sense that the entities of this world are faint forms of corporeal existents nor that they are weaker in the level of their existence than bodies. Rather, this expression shows that there exist fixed and unchangeable forms in that world, which are not only no less weak than material entities, but are considered to be more powerful than them.

Shaykh al-Ishraq considered the forms which are seen in a mirror to be sorts of abstract phantoms, and he also related genies and the forms which are seen in dreams to this world. Furthermore, he held that sensory perception is also the observation of imaginal forms which exist in this world.

However, Sadr al- Muta'allihin held that sensory perception is related to the imaginal plane of the soul, as will be explained in the appropriate place. As for the forms which are seen in a mirror, they are brought into existence by the reflection of light, and have no relation to the imaginal world.

Likewise, according to the exoteric meaning of the Qur'an and sunnah, the genies are subtle corporeal existents, which in the words of the Noble Qur'an are created of 'fire,' and have corporeal characteristics, and are even like man in having responsibilities, rewards and punishments, although because of their

subtlety, ordinary people cannot sense them.

In any case, the existence of immaterial phantoms is undeniable, and in the sacred traditions one comes across expressions like 'phantoms' (ashbah) and 'shadows' (adhlal), which are comparable to immaterial phantoms. There are few people who have taken a few steps down the road of spiritual wayfaring who have not observed these sorts of existents. However, it is not very easy to establish their existence by means of rational proof.

Some philosophers have attempted to prove the existence of this world by employing the doctrine of the nobler contingent, while Sadr al-Muta'allihin took advantage of another doctrine, which he himself founded, called the doctrine of the baser contingent (imkan-e akhass).

However, the difficulty here is that one cannot definitively prove that there is a specific gradation from intellectual substance to imaginal substance to corporeal substance so that one may consider the corporeal world to radiate from the imaginal world and the latter to be an intermediary for the creation of the material world.

At the most one may say that immaterial substance may be considered as the source for the sensory and imaginary forms which occur in the souls of men, that is, the immaterial substances may emanate these forms while they lack intellectual levels. In this way, on the basis of the Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent, their existence is established.

It may be concluded that the most plausible way to establish the existence of imaginal substance is through mystical disclosures and the words of the Infallibles, Peace and salutations to all of them.

At the end of these discussions it is to be noted that the division of existence into the material and immaterial is a rational division which is comprehensive and exclusive; however, the confinement of the immaterial worlds to the intellectual, psychic, and imaginal is not a rational comprehensive and exclusive division. The addition of the imaginal world of the Illuminationists to the other worlds shows that it is not irrational to suppose that one or more other worlds exist of whose characteristics we are unaware.

1. Nakir and Munkar are the names of the two angels who interrogate a person immediately following his death and burial about his religious beliefs. [Tr.]

Lesson 46: Matter and Form

Views of the Philosophers on Matter and Form

We have thus far taken up the discussion of three kinds of immaterial substance and one kind of

material substance, and we have established their existence. However, we previously reported that the Aristotelians held that corporeal substances are composed of two other substances called matter and form, the former being the aspect of the potentiality of bodies and the latter being the aspect of the actuality of bodies. We shall now review this theory.

Before anything, we must bear in mind that matter, in the sense of the ground for the appearance of a new existent and that which receives its actuality, is accepted by nearly all philosophers, as, for example, water is said to be the matter for steam, soil for plants and animals, and grains and pits for their plants.

An existent which is the matter for other existents but which does not itself appear from some prior matter, in technical terms is said to possess 'original existence' (wujud ibda'i) and to be without need of a material cause, and it is called the 'matter of matters' (maddat al-mawadd) or prime matter (hayula ula).

The difference of opinion between the Aristotelians and others is over whether prime matter is a substance possessing actuality which can be considered a kind of corporeal substance, or is a pure potentiality without any kind of actuality whose only property is the ability to accept corporeal forms.

The opinion of the Aristotelians is the latter, and this was also accepted by most of the great Islamic philosophers, including Farabi, Ibn Sina and Mir Damad. In many instances, Sadr al-Muta'allihin has followed the same line, but in some cases he called hayula a 'privative thing' (amr 'adami) and in some cases he referred to it as a shadow which the intellect considers for corporeal existents, but which does not have true existence, as the concept of 'shadow' is abstracted from weak luminescence and has no existence beyond that of light.[1] There are also some scholars who consider it incorrect to attribute the above-mentioned position to Aristotle.[2]

On the assumption of the existence of prime matter as a substance lacking actuality, it would seem inappropriate to consider matter and form alongside bodies all equivalently as kinds of substances. Perhaps it would be better if matter and form were considered to be two kinds of material substances, with the explanation that prime matter is inseparable from corporeal form, and that the combination of them is called 'body.'

The main problem is that the existence of a substance which essentially lacks any kind of actuality cannot be established, and it seems that, with regard to this problem, the correct position is that of Shaykh al-Ishraq, 'Allamah Tusi and other philosophers who have denied the existence of this sort of substance.

With the denial of prime matter as a substance lacking any sort of actuality, no room remains for establishing the existence of another sort of substance which is the first form for prime matter and that which grants it actuality, for according to this view, which is attributed to the Platonists, the first matter is a substance possessing actuality, but which is not composed of matter and form.

However, new forms occur in it either alternatively or simultaneously, such that a specific elemental form appears in it, and with its removal, it is replaced by another elemental form. However, the elemental form comes into existence simultaneously with the mineral form or vegetable form, and altogether they are incarnated in the substance of the body, that is, their parts correspond precisely to one another.

However, through all these alterations, the body always remains as a substance which possesses actuality, despite the denials by some philosophers that the new forms are substances. These philosophers only accept them as accidents for the body.

Given the denial of matter without actuality, and the acceptance of the forms of species, as kinds of substance, corporeal substances may be divided into two general kinds: one is that of a substance which does not need a location at which to be incarnated, and this is the same as body; the other is a substance which needs another substance to be incarnated in it and impressed in it, and this substance is the form of a species, such as the elemental, mineral and vegetable forms.

However, with the denial that these sorts of forms are substances, the corporeal and material substances will be confined to bodies. This seems to indicate the difference between primary and secondary substances in Aristotle. The primary substances are not incarnated, only the secondary ones are.

An Argument for the Aristotelian Theory

The Aristotelians, who believe in prime matter as substance devoid of actuality, have offered for their position two arguments which were originally close to one another: one of these is called the 'proof from potentiality and actuality' and the other is called the 'proof from union and separation.' They may be summarized as follows.

There are transformations in bodies which are unions and separations, as well as substantial and accidental changes; for example, a continuous unified body may be transformed into two separate bodies, water changes into steam, the seed of a tree changes into a tree. Without a doubt, these various changes do not take place in such a way that the first substance is completely obliterated and one or more other existents are brought into existence from pure nothingness.

Rather, certainly something from the prior existent remains in the later existent. However, that which remains is not the form and actuality of the prior existent; hence there is no other alternative but that another substance exists in them which preserve the existential relation between them. This in itself essentially and necessarily must have no actuality, and for this reason, it accepts various sorts of actuality.

In this way it is established that there is a substance which has no actuality, and which is characterized by the acceptance of forms, and, in philosophical terms, it is called pure potentiality. In other words,

every corporeal existent possesses two aspects: one is the aspect of actuality and the possession of properties, and the other is the aspect of potentiality and privation in relation to future actualities.

These two aspects are different from each other, and so, every corporeal existent is composed of two different objective things. And since it is not possible for the existence of a substance to be composed of two accidents or of a substance and an accident, there is no other choice but that they must be composed of two substantial parts, one which is the aspect of actuality, and the other the aspect of potentiality.

This argument can also be put in the following form, or the following may be considered as another argument. It is possible for all bodies to change into another kind of body, such as the change of one element into another or the transformation of one or more elements into minerals, vegetables or animals (potentiality and actuality).

Likewise, all bodies have the possibility to be changed into two or several other bodies of the same kind (union and separation). This possibility for change and transformation is a kind of quality which is called the 'quality of preparedness' (kayfiyyat isti'dadi) or 'possibility of preparedness' (imkan isti'dadi). This is capable of intensity and weakness, perfection and deficiency, as the preparedness of a fetus to change into an existent which possesses a spirit is greater than that of a zygote.

This accident needs a substantial subject which cannot be considered to be a substance possessing actuality, since this substance has to have the possibility for the appearance of this quality, and the supposed possibility will be another quality dependent on a third possibility, and likewise to infinity.

This implies that in order for any existent to be transformed into another, and for the appearance of every new substance or accident infinity of accidents must occur each of which has temporal priority to another. Hence, it is inevitable that these accidents must be borne by a substance which is the potentiality, possibility and preparedness itself and which has no sort of actuality at all.

Critique

The mentioned arguments are not firm enough, and all of them are more or less controversial. However, since the pivotal concept in all of them is the concept of 'change,' we would do well to provide a brief explanation of it, although a more detailed discussion will come under the topics of change and motion.[3]

Change and transformation may be imagined in a number of forms. Of those relevant to this topic, the following are the most important:

1. Accidental change, such as the change of the color of an apple from green to yellow and from yellow to red.

It must be noted that according to philosophers such as Shaykh al-Ishraq, changes of species are of this

sort, for they considered specific forms to be accidents. Likewise, according to modern physicists, the change of water into steam and vice versa are sorts of gathering together and separating of molecules, not a sort of substantial change.

2. The appearance of a new substantial form in matter, such as the appearance of vegetable form in soil, according to the position of the Aristotelians who consider specific forms to be substances.

3. The obliteration of a temporally contingent substantial form from matter, such as the change from vegetable to soil, according to the Aristotelians.

4. The obliteration of a previous substantial form and the appearance of another substantial form, such as the change of an element into another element, according to the Aristotelians.

5. The substantial attachment of an immaterial thing to matter without being incarnated in it (for incarnation is characteristic of matter), such as the attachment of spirit to body.

6. The cutting off of the above-mentioned attachment, such as the death of an animal or man.

By attending to the above classification, the weakness of the first argument becomes clear, for if change is related to accidents of the body, corporeal substance will be preserved with its actuality, and there will be no need for the assumption of a substance without actuality. Likewise, if there is a sort of attachment of the soul to the body, or its detachment (the fifth or sixth cases) the substance of the body with its own actuality remains.

Also in the second and third cases, in which a new substantial form is incarnated in a body or is separated from it, the previous substance is preserved. It is only in the fourth case that it is conceivable that with the obliteration of the previous form, a substance possessing actuality does not remain; hence, the thing which is in common between them is a substance which lacks actuality.

But we must remember that according to the philosophers, the corporeal form is never corrupted or obliterated, and if the existence of prime matter were also established, it would persist along with the corporeal form (regardless of substantial motion, which will be discussed in its own place). With regard to this point, a question that may be posed is, what rational objections would arise if body is considered a simple substance (i.e., not composed of matter and form) in which another form is incarnated or from which another form is detached?

Perhaps the second explanation may be considered as the answer to this question, that is, body with its own actuality cannot take a new form, but it must possess another part whose essential property is receptivity, and essentially requires no actuality.

The second explanation is based on the notion that the aspects of potentiality and actuality are two entified aspects, each of which has specific objective instances. Since the existence of a body cannot be considered to be composed of two accidents or one substance and one accident, there is no other

choice but that they must be considered to be composed of two substances instead of these two aspects.

This notion is debatable, for the concepts of actuality and potentiality, like other fundamental philosophical concepts, are secondary philosophical intelligibles, which are abstracted by the intellect with a specific attention.[4]

In other words, when we take two corporeal things into consideration, one of which lacks the other (as the seed of a tree lacks the fruit of the tree), but which can come to possess it, then the concept of potentiality or receptivity is related to the first existent, and when it comes to possess the other, the concept of actuality is abstracted from it.

Hence, these concepts are abstracted concepts, which are obtained by the comparison of two things, and they do not have entified instances. There is no reason to consider the aspects of potentiality or receptivity to be entified things on the basis of which the existence of a substance or even an accident may be established, the whatness of which is the whatness of potentiality and receptivity.

Likewise the establishment of the causal relation among existents does not require that there be an existent whose whatness is being a cause or being an effect. This is another example of how first and second intelligibles are confused.

It is to be concluded that when a corporeal substance is compared to another substance or to an accident which is capable of being incarnated in it, it is called 'potential' (bil quwwah) in relation to this incarnation, but this does not mean that it possesses an objective part called 'potentiality.'

Secondly, the second premise may be disputed, for it is possible that one may consider the objective existence of a body (not its whatness) to be composed of substance and a number of accidents. Especially, according to the position of those who consider accidents to be aspects and levels, of the existence of substance. Hence, supposing that each of the two aspects of potentiality and actuality possess objective instances, one can consider the instance of the aspect of actuality to be corporeal substance and the instance of the aspect of potentiality to be one of its accidents.

The third explanation also has two basic premises. One is that the possibility of preparedness is a kind of objective accident and is a whatish concept. The other is that the characterization ('urudh) of this accident requires potentiality and a prior possibility, and hence in order to avoid an infinite regress a substance should be posited which itself is the very potentiality, possibility and preparedness.

This explanation is also flawed, for, first of all; preparedness is an abstracted concept which cannot have entified instances. For example, to say that the seed of a tree has the preparedness to turn into a tree means that the seed of the tree has the preparedness for turning into a tree, and if water and warmth and the other necessary conditions obtain, gradually it will develop and roots, leaves and branches will appear. So that which is entified is the seed, water, warmth, etc., but there is no additional entified

existent by the name of 'preparedness,' and consequently, preparedness cannot be considered a kind of objective accident.

Secondly, on the assumption that preparedness is a entified quality, one may consider the first preparedness to be the effect of corporeal substance. In this way infinite regress may be avoided without need for positing a substantial potentiality (matter lacking actuality).

There is another problem with this position, which will not be mentioned in order to avoid prolonging the discussion. We merely indicate that being an existent corresponds to being actual, and moreover, they are in truth the same.

Hence, basically the supposition that an existent lacks actuality seems to be incorrect. The assumption that matter obtains actuality only in the shadow of a form is not coherent with the essential property attributed to matter of lacking actuality and being pure potentiality.

Perhaps it will be said that the pure potentiality of matter is like the essential possibility of every whatness which is inseparable from it. At the same time, in the shadow of causality, it becomes necessary 'by another.'

However, it must be noted that the essential possibility of a whatness is a purely intellectual attribute which has no objective instances, as whatness itself is a respectival concept. But in the case of matter, it is assumed that this is an objective substance whose existence is pure potentiality. Perhaps it is for this reason that Sadr al-Muta'allihin called prime matter an intellectual and privative thing (amr 'aqli wa 'adami). (Take note.)

1. Cf., Asfar, Vol. 5, p. 146, and Mabda wa Ma'ad, p. 265.
2. Cf., Abu al-Barakat, Mu'tabar, Vol. 3, p. 200.
3. Cf., Lesson Fifty-One.
4. Cf., Lesson Fifty-Two.

Lesson 47: Accidents

Views of Philosophers about Accidents

As was previously indicated, it is well known among philosophers that substance is a highest genus, and it is a specific category which has various species. However, accident is not a specific category, but is a general concept abstracted from nine categories, and the predication of it to each of them is accidental, not essential.

In contrast to this position, three other positions may be indicated. One is the position of Mir Damad who

considered accident, like substance, to be a category and a highest genus, and those which others take to be accidental categories; he considered to be species of accidents.

Another position is that the categories are: substance, quantity, quality, and relation, and other accidental categories, according to this position, are considered to be kinds of relations. Finally, the position of Shaykh al-Ishraq (Suhravardi) is that the categories consist of the four mentioned above in addition to motion.[1]

It seems that, first of all, substance and accident are types of secondary philosophical intelligibles, none of which can be considered a highest genus and whatish category. Secondly, as has been proclaimed by Sadr al-Muta'allihin, motion is an ontological concept and is neither itself a category, nor is it included in any whatish category.

Thirdly, many things which are called objective accidents and are taken to be categories or types of categories (including all of the seven relational categories) are abstracted concepts, and none of them are objective accidents to be considered as independent whatish categories or types of categories.

It is clear that the presentation, criticism, and review of all of these positions require more detailed discussion which is not very useful. For this reason a short discussion will suffice for this topic.

Quantity

The category of quantity may be defined in this way: it is an accident which is essentially capable of being divided; and the modifier 'essentially' is used in order to exclude from the definition divisions of other categories, because their divisions are obtained subordinate to the divisions of quantity.

Quantity may be generally divided into two kinds: continuous (i. e., geometrical quantity) and discrete (i. e., number), each of which includes different kinds which are discussed in the two sciences of geometry and arithmetic.

It should be noted that the philosophers consider the first number to be two, which is divisible into two units. One is considered to be the source of the numbers, although it is not held to be a kind of number. It seems that it can easily be accepted that number is not a whatish concept, and that in the external world there is nothing by the name of 'number' but only things which have the attributes of being unities or pluralities (numbered).

For example, when an individual person is located somewhere, nothing is brought into existence called unity over and above his own existence. However, attending to the fact that there is no one beside him, the concept of unit will be abstracted from him. Likewise, when another individual is located beside him, the second individual is also a unit, but we consider them together and relate the concept of two to them, although there is no objective accident between them by the name of the number two.

By the way, how can a single accident (the number two) subsist in two subjects?! (Take note.) And also, when a third individual sits beside the other two, the number three is abstracted from the set of them. However it is not the case that an entified accident called two has been destroyed and that another one called three has been brought into existence. In this very same situation we can consider the first two individuals and relate the number two to them, as we can consider one of them along with the newly entered individual and call them two persons.

Further evidence that the concept of number is respectival (i'tibari) is that it is an accident of the numbers themselves, their fractions, and sets, and if number were something entified, an infinite number would occur in limited subjects.

Likewise, number is equally related to immaterial and material things, to the real and to the fictitious. Are we to consider number to be an immaterial accident when related to immaterial things and a material accident when related to material things?! Are we to consider number to be real when it is related to real things, and consider it respectival when the same number is predicated to a respectival thing? Or are we to allow that something respectival have a real entified attribute and accident?

Regarding continuous quantities, as was made clear in the discussions of time and space, they are aspects of the existence of bodies, and they have no existence apart from the existence of bodies. In technical terms, composite making (ja'l ta'lifi) and independent creation do not apply to them, even if the mind is able to consider them as independent whatnesses.

Considering this point, there is a sense in which they can be taken to be accidents of bodies, but accidents whose existence is the very existence of the body, and all of their whatnesses exist by one existence. In other words, the existence of these kinds of accidents is an aspect of the existence of substances.

Relational Categories

Among the ten categories, there are seven each of which is regarded as possessing some kind of relation, and for this reason they are called the relational categories and some philosophers have taken them to be species of the category of relation (nisbah or idhafah). The relational categories are as follows:

1. The category of relation (idhafah), which is obtained from the occurrence of a relation between two existents, and is divided into those which have similar terms, and those which have opposite terms. The former kind is like the relation 'being the brother of' which holds between two brothers, or the relation of simultaneity between two things which exist at one time. The latter kind is like the relation of a father to his child, or the relation of priority and posteriority between two parts of time, or two phenomena which come into existence at two times.

2. The category of where (‘ayn), which is obtained from the relation between a material thing and its location.

3. The category of when (mata), which is obtained from the relation between a material existent and its time.

4. The category of position (wadh‘), which is obtained from the relation among the parts of a thing to each other, considering their directions, such as the condition of standing, a posture in which the parts of the body are located over one another so that the head is on top, or the condition of reclining, which is abstracted from the location of the parts of the body next to one another in a horizontal form.

5. The category of possession (jidah or milk), which is obtained from the relation of one thing to another which more or less encompasses it, like the condition of the body being covered by its clothes, or the head being covered by a hat.

6. The category of activity (an yaf’al), which describes the gradual influence of a material agent on the matter acted upon, such as the sun which gradually warms water.

7. The category of passivity (an yanfa’il), which describes passive matter which is gradually affected by a material agent, such as water which is gradually warmed by the sun.

It should be noted that all of these categories, except for that of relation, are specific to material things, since they possess time and place, and the relations between parts and considerations of direction are conceivable only for bodies. Likewise, the encompassing of clothing and the like is also peculiar to material existents. Also, gradual affecting and being affected by occur only among material things.

However, the category of relation is common between material and immaterial things. Examples of it can be found among material things, such as the relation of above and below between two stories of a building and relation can be found to hold between immaterial things, such as the divine eternal priority (taqaddum sarmadi) to other immaterial things, and the temporal simultaneity among the intellects.

Likewise, one can consider one term of a relation to be an immaterial existent and the other term to be a material existent, such as the ontological priority of an immaterial cause to its material effect.

It seems that none of these are primary intelligible whatish concepts. The best reason for this is that relating one existent to another depends on one who relates them, who compares them with one another, and a concept dependent on comparing and relating cannot describe a thing which is entified and independent of mental respects.

For example, the relation between two brothers, or the relation between a father and his children, is not a entified thing which exists between the related terms; rather, by considering two individuals who have come into existence by means of one father and mother, and who share this respect, the mind abstracts a relation with similar terms called brotherhood.

Considering that the father is the preparatory cause for the appearance of his child and not the reverse, the mind abstracts a relation with opposite terms called fatherhood. It is not the case that with the birth of a child another entified thing comes about called the relation of fatherhood, and that after the birth of a second child yet another objective thing called brotherhood appears between the two children.

Likewise, the concepts of greater and smaller, closer and farther, equality and simultaneity, etc., are all concepts which are obtained by comparison, and none of them has a entified instance, although each of them has a specific source of abstraction, and one cannot attribute relational concepts in an arbitrary manner.

Among the evidence for the respectival nature of relation is that, on the one hand, it is applied to the relation between God Almighty and His creatures, while on the other hand, it can hold between two nonentified things, between an existent and a nonexistent, and even between two impossible objects. It is clear that God Almighty cannot be the subject of any accident, and likewise, a nonentified thing and a nonexistent cannot be characterized by entified objective properties.

By examining other relational categories it becomes clear that, except for the two terms of the relation, which are the source of abstraction for these concepts, there is no other entified object in existence by the name of the objective relation, let alone that a certain configuration should appear in the subject due to the influence of the relation. The attribution (ittisaf) of these concepts to objective things is no reason for their existence as entified objects, as is the case with
regard to all secondary philosophical intelligibles.

1. Cf., Suhravardi, Talwihat, p. 11.

Lesson 48: Quality

The Category of Quality

Every human being finds various mental states within himself through knowledge by presence, such as the states of joy and sorrow, fear and hope, pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, love and enmity, etc. Likewise, he perceives some corporeal attributes through his own external senses, which are often changeable, such as colors, tastes, smells, sounds, etc.

Philosophers have included all of these psychic and corporeal states and attributes in a universal concept and have called it quality, which they have taken as a genus for all of them, and defined as follows: quality is an accident which is essentially incapable of division and does not include the meaning of relation. In actuality, they have introduced it as the negation of the features of quantity and relational

categories.

It appears that, disregarding disputes which generally occur about the Aristotelian system of genus and difference, quality must not be taken to be a part of the whatnesses of these various material and immaterial accidents; rather they should be considered general abstracted concepts, such as state, configuration (hay'at), and accident, which are applied in the form of accidental predication to a number of things which in reality differ.

In any case, among the categories of accidents, those which may be considered definitely and certainly to be objective accidents which possess entified objects are in the category of quality, some of whose instances are perceived through infallible knowledge by presence.

On the basis of induction, philosophers have divided quality into four types: psychic qualities, sensory qualities, qualities specific to quantity, and dispositional qualities.

Psychic Qualities

A psychic quality (kayf nafsani) is an immaterial accident which only applies to psychic substances (jawahir nafsani). Until now, no precise and complete table of its kinds has been obtained. Philosophers consider knowledge, power, will, aversion, pleasure, pain, passive states, and mental habits and proficiencies to be among the psychic qualities. They have had discussions about them which have been related for the most part to philosophical psychology, the science of the soul ('ilm al-nafs).

As has been indicated, the most certain of all the kinds of qualities are psychic qualities with which one becomes acquainted through knowledge by presence and inner experience. Even the likes of Hume, who has raised doubts about many certainties, has considered the existence of this group of qualities to be certain and undeniable.

Among the types of psychic quality, that which has the greatest relevance to philosophical discussions is knowledge, and for this reason there will be an independent discussion of this. After knowledge, will, power, and freedom are considered, which were discussed in Lesson Thirty-Eight, and more explanations pertaining to them will be found in the discussions of the attributes of God Almighty.

Sensible Qualities

By sensible qualities are meant those material qualities which are perceived through the external senses and sensory organs.

On the basis of a view which was accepted in ancient natural science, according to which the external senses are of five kinds, philosophers have divided the sensory qualities into five groups: color and light as visible qualities, sounds as audible qualities, tastes as gustatory qualities, smells as olfactory qualities, and cold, hot, rough and soft as tactile qualities. But in modern psychology, it has been proven

that there are other senses in addition to the five well-known senses which must be taken into consideration when classifying the sensory qualities.

The proof of the existence of sensible qualities outside the realm of perception is not as easy as proving psychic qualities, for knowledge by presence does not apply to them. The question may be raised as to whether what we perceive as states of material things exist in the same way in the context of the external world, or whether the soul is capable of perceiving these things within itself as a result of a chain of physical, chemical and physiological actions and reactions, while they themselves cannot be proven to exist in the material world.

In order to provide a correct answer to this question one must make use of arguments whose premises are drawn from the empirical sciences. The definitive establishment of these sorts of premises depends on the progress of the relevant sciences. For example, the whatness of energy and the relation between matter and energy are not yet known with certainty, and for this reason a definitive philosophical analysis cannot be provided for them.

The ancient philosophers did not hold that light and heat had any reality apart from the states and accidents which are perceived by the sensory organs, and in this respect they considered them to be essentially simple and unanalyzable.

However, on the basis of some views in modern physics, they must be considered to be material substances, and however much they are called energy as opposed to matter in the terminology of physics, since it is believed that matter comes into existence through the concentration of energy and turns into energy through decomposition and radiation, from a philosophical perspective, energy must be considered a kind of body. It is impossible for a body to be composed of something other than bodies or to change through decomposition into something other than extended substance (i. e., body).

The issue is not settled with this, and with further attention it becomes clear that what is perceived directly is not the substance of light and heat, but an attribute of luminosity and heat. Here the previous question may be repeated as to whether the sensible qualities exist in the external world in the same way that they are reflected in the realm of perception.

Qualities Specific to Quantities

Philosophers have also named another group of qualities as qualities specific to quantities. One group of them, such as oddness and evenness, are attributes of number. Another group, such as straightness and curvature, are attributes of geometrical subjects.

Apparently, the reason these qualities are considered to be an independent group and not sensible qualities is that they are not perceived directly by the senses.

The attributes of numbers cannot be considered to be real things and objective accidents, given that

number itself is respectival (i'tibari) and lacks an object in the external world. However, the attributes of geometrical subjects, such as the straightness and curvature of a line, or the flatness, concavity and convexity of a plane are abstracted concepts, abstracted from the mode of existence of bodies by several intermediaries.

This is especially so, given that line and plane themselves are negative limits (hudud 'adami) of bodies without any real existence of their own, which the human mind loosely considers to be whatnesses existing in the external world. Therefore, it is difficult to consider this group of qualities as objective accidents possessing entified objects. At most they may be considered to be analytic accidents.

Dispositional Qualities

The fourth type of quality which philosophers have taken to be in the category of quality is that of dispositional quality (imkan isti'dadi; isti'dad, lit. preparedness), which they have defined as follows: a quality by means of which the appearance of a specific phenomenon gains preponderance in a subject.

Sometimes it is called dispositional contingency, opposed to other kinds of contingency, such as essential contingency (imkan dhati) and occurrent contingency (imkan wuqu'i),[1] because other meanings of contingency are secondary philosophical intelligibles, and non-whatish concepts, contrary to dispositional contingency, which is taken to be a whatness belonging to the category of quality.

The reason given for the entifiedness of dispositional qualities is that they have existential attributes such as proximity and remoteness and intensity and weakness; for example, the preparedness of a zygote to acquire a soul is remoter and weaker than the preparedness of a complete fetus.

The preparedness of the seed of a tree to turn into a tree is more proximate and stronger than the preparedness of the soil. If dispositional contingencies were also intellectual concepts, like the other expressions involving contingency, they would not be subject to such attributions.

In order to evaluate this reasoning, it is necessary to refer to the character of the acquaintance of the mind with the concept of disposition or preparedness and to relate it to some objective existents which have this attribute. With experience of changes in objective things, man acquires knowledge that the appearance of every entified phenomenon depends on the occurrence of specific conditions and the removal of certain obstacles, which usually takes place gradually.

For example, the transformation of water into steam is conditional on a specific temperature which is gradually reached. The growth of a plant in a salty field is conditional on the removal of harmful minerals and the provision of useful minerals and the necessary water and heat, which do not appear all at once.

Noting the causal relation and the necessity for the occurrence of conditions requiring existence and nonexistence, when we consider matter (i. e., the material cause of a phenomenon) in relation to its given actuality, if all the necessary conditions are provided and all the obstacles are removed, then it will

be completely prepared and ready for the reception of the new actuality.

If even a few of the existential conditions do not obtain, or some of the obstacles are not removed, then the preparedness will be remote and weak. If only some of the conditions exist or if most of the obstacles remain, then the preparedness of the matter will be very remote and weak.

In conclusion, in a material thing which possesses the preparedness for taking on a new actuality, other than the occurrence of conditions and the removal of obstacles, no other entified thing by the name of 'preparedness' obtains. Rather, preparedness, or disposition, is a rational concept which is abstracted from the occurrence of conditions and the removal of obstacles. Evidence for this is that this concept will not be abstracted until one compares the previous and present situations.

In the case of dispositions, the application of expressions such as proximate and remote, intense and weak, perfect and imperfect and the like, is figurative and indicates the abundance and paucity of conditions and obstacles.

What is interesting is that Sadr al-Muta'allihin, despite following the views of other philosophers about substance, accidents and some other topics, and considering dispositional possibility as a type belonging to the category of quality, has at times confessed to the fact that the concept of preparedness is abstracted from the removal of obstacles and impediments.

Among these, is his statement in the Asfar where he says, "Dispositional possibility depends on the removal of obstacles and impediments, so that if they are all removed it will be called a proximate potentiality (quwwah qarib), and if they are imperfectly removed it will be called a remote potentiality (quwwah ba'id).[2]

Likewise, in his Mabda wa Ma'ad,[3] he is almost explicit that disposition is an abstracted concept and a secondary intelligible, and what is meant by saying that it has an objective existence is that it is attributed to objective things.

Conclusions

From the discussions about substance and accident, the following conclusions have been reached:

1. The concepts of substance and accident are secondary philosophical intelligibles, not primary intelligibles or whatish concepts. Therefore, they should not be considered as genera of whatnesses or as whatnesses in themselves.

2. Immaterial substances include complete immaterial existents (i.e., vertical and horizontal intellects), psychic substances, and imaginal substances. Material substance is the same as corporeal substance, and if specific forms be considered substances, material substances will be divisible into two subdivisions, body and specific forms.

3. Among the concepts which are called accidental categories are: psychic qualities and sensory qualities, which can be considered whatish concepts possessing entified objectivity. Continuous quantity, which includes geometrical quantities and time, must be considered an analytic accident which refers to dimensions of the existence of bodies. Also, qualities specific to quantity can be taken as analytic accidents.

However, other types of accidents are intellectual and abstracted concepts which have no objective existence themselves as independent types of accidents, though they possess an objective source in external reality from which they are abstracted.

4. Of the nine categories of accidents, six of them are specific to material things: where (‘ayn), when (mata), position (wadh‘), possession (jidah), activity (an yaf‘al) and passivity (an yanfa‘il), and likewise continuous quantity and quality specific to it, and sensible qualities. Discrete quantities (numbers) and relations are common between material and immaterial things. Psychic qualities are specific to immaterial psychic substances.

Concepts common to material and immaterial things (discrete quantity and relation) are respectival (i‘tibari) and abstracted things, and this very commonality between immaterial and material things is a sign of their not being entified, for a unitary whatness cannot be material at some times and immaterial at other times.

Quantity is not a unitary whatness; rather it is a general concept which is applied to several whatnesses with different realities, some of which are specific to material things and others specific to immaterial things.

5. Analytic abstractions such as continuous quantities and their qualities have no existence other than that of their subjects. These kinds of accidents must be considered as mere aspects of the existence of substance, which with their own subjects correspond to a simple posit (ja‘l basit).

Objective accidents, such as psychic qualities, have a special accidental existence, and the posit of them is composite (ja‘l ta’lifi). Numbers and relational categories and dispositional qualities are intellectual concepts and they have no real posits.

6. Meanwhile, it has become known that if a concept has one of these signs, it will not be whatish:

a) being predicated of immaterial and material things equally, such as numbers;

b) Being predicated of the concept itself, like the number two, this may be predicated to two number twos.

c) Commonality between the Necessary Existent and contingent existents, such as relations.

d) Inclusion of the meaning of relation, such as all relational categories.

e) Changing with respect without an external change, such as above and below.

1. Essential possibility (imkan dhati) is an intellectual characteristic for a whatness insofar as it essentially does not have a preponderance for existence or non-existence, and neither of these is necessary for it. Occurrent possibility (imkan wuqu'i) is another intellectual characteristic for a whatness insofar as its existence, in addition to being not essentially impossible, also does not imply any other impossibility. [Tr.]
2. Cf., Asfar, Vol. 2, p. 376.
3. Mulla Sadra, Mabda' wa Ma'ad, p. 318-319.

Lesson 49: The Reality of Knowledge

Introduction

Many issues, most of which have to do with epistemology, can be raised regarding knowledge, and in this book, as well, the most important of them were mentioned in the part on epistemology. However, other discussions of knowledge are also possible from an ontological perspective, and philosophers have mentioned these in various places in their philosophical discussions. Sadr al-Muta'allihin has set discussions about knowledge as an independent topic.

Among these discussions is that of the immateriality of knowledge and the knower, which is appropriate to discussion of the 'immaterial and material,' and for this reason we mention it in this section, and following this, we take up the problem of the unity of the knower and the known.

Regarding the ontology of knowledge several questions may be raised, such as, what is the reality of knowledge and whether all types of knowledge have a single whatness, or at the very least, whether they all belong to a single specific category, and whether all types of knowledge are immaterial or whether they are all material, or are some of them immaterial and others material?

In order to answer such questions it is first necessary to take a glance at the types of knowledge, which were discussed to some extent in the part on epistemology.

A Review of the Types of Knowledge

Awareness of an existent is either obtained without the intermediary of a form or concept, in which case it is called 'presentational knowledge,' or it occurs through the intermediary of a sensory or imaginary form or through a rational or prehensive (wahmi) concept, in which case it is called 'acquired knowledge' and is specific to souls attached to matter.

A level of the existence of the soul called 'mind' (dhin) is considered to be like a receptacle for acquired

knowledge, and mind is said to have various levels and aspects. Some of its levels oversee others, so that the lower levels obtain judgments concerning external reality in relation to the mind and another knowledge corresponding to this is then obtained, as discussed in Lesson Nineteen.

Human awareness of a single real state of affairs (nafs al-amr) is reflected in the mind in the form of a proposition, the simplest form of which is a predicative proposition which in turn may be divided into simple existential propositions (halliyyah basitah), compound propositions (halliyyah murakkabah), and other sorts of propositions.

In a predicative proposition there are at least two mental concepts, one of which is the subject and the other the predicate, and man takes into consideration the relation between them and makes a judgment of establishment (thubut) for affirmative propositions (qadhiyyah mujabah) or of absence of establishment for negative propositions, although there are differences of opinion in this field which were indicated in Lesson Fourteen.

Judgment or assertion (in technical terms) is obtained when a person believes in the purport of the proposition, even if the belief is mere opinion. The belief of a person does not always correspond to reality, and sometimes one may have beliefs about which one is convinced and definite but which are contrary to reality, cases of which are called compound ignorance.

Considering these points, acquired knowledge may be investigated along various lines, and each case may be discussed separately, but that which is usually taken up as a topic of discussion is the immateriality of perception, especially rational perception.

The Reality of Knowledge by Presence

In presentational knowledge, the essence of the known is present to the knower, and the knower perceives an entified existence, and this perceiving is not something external to the essence of the knower, but rather is an aspect of his existence, and is similar to the analytical accidents of a body which are considered to be aspects of its existence.

In other words, just as extension is not something separate from the existence of a body, but is a concept which the mind obtains through its own analysis, so too, knowledge by presence does not have an existence separate from the existence of the knower. The concepts of knowledge and knower are obtained through mental analysis of the existence of the knower.

An instance of it in the case of God Almighty is His Sacred Essence, which is neither substance nor accident, and in the case of creatures, is their rational or spiritual substance itself. Naturally, such knowledge will be neither an accident nor a quality.

Knowledge by presence may be divided into kinds, about some of which all of the Islamic philosophers are in agreement, and there is disagreement about others.

To explain, the known in presentational knowledge is sometimes the essence of the knower himself, such as self–knowledge in the case of souls and complete immaterial existents. In these cases the knower and the known do not have numerically different existences, and the difference between being the knower and being the known is respectival (i'tibari) and will depend on mental respect.

This is the kind of knowledge by presence about which there is general agreement among philosophers, including the Peripatetics and the Illuminationists. Sometimes the knower and known have numerically distinct existences, but not in the sense that one of them is completely separate and independent of the other. But is the very dependence and relation to the other, such as the knowledge of the existence–giving cause for its effect and vice versa. In this way two other kinds of presentational knowledge are obtained, one is the knowledge of the emanating cause for its effect and the other is the knowledge of the effect for the cause.

These two kinds are accepted by the Illuminationists and by Sadr al– Muta'allihin and his followers. All of them agree that the effect's presentational knowledge of its cause is specific to immaterial effects, for material existence is diffusion itself in the realm of space and time, and has no presence by which to perceive the essence of its cause.

However, with regard to the cause's presentational knowledge of its effect, Sadr al–Muta'allihin and some of his followers believed that in this case as well, the effect must be immaterial, and that basically knowledge about material existence insofar as it is material is not obtained, for particulars diffused in time and space have no presence that the essence of the knower might perceive.

However, others such as Muhaqqiq Sabzavari do not accept this condition for this kind of knowledge. They hold that the absence of material particulars from one another is not incompatible with their having a presence in relation to an existent which existentially encompasses them, as the diffusion of temporal existents in the realm of time is not incompatible with their collection in relation to the realm of perpetuity (dahr) and the existents encompassing time, and this is the correct position.

A fourth kind of knowledge by presence is also imaginable, and this is the knowledge of one another of two immaterial effects at the same level, but to establish that there is such a kind of knowledge by proof is difficult. It is to be concluded that in all the kinds of knowledge by presence, knowledge is the essence of the knower himself and is immaterial, and naturally it is not a kind of psychic accident or quality, although it is possible for the known to be a substance or an accident, and according to the endorsed position, will be either immaterial or material.

The Nature of Acquired Knowledge

Without a doubt, knowledge in the sense of definite belief, as opposed to opinion and doubt, is nevertheless similar to opinion and doubt in that it is a mental state or quality, and like other types of mental qualities, it is devoid of matter, for it does not make sense to suppose that a material accident

occurs in an immaterial subject.

However, judgment about knowledge in the sense of logical propositions and their parts requires further attention, for as was indicated, a proposition is composed of different parts which generally cannot all be considered psychic qualities. Perhaps the reason for differences of opinion among some philosophers is that in some cases they consider one part of a proposition and in other cases another.

In any case, the pillars of a predicative proposition, which are its subject and predicate, are two independent concepts, each of which is separately conceivable and without need of conceiving something else. But the case is different regarding relation and judgment, for they cannot occur without conceiving the subject and predicate, and their concepts have prepositional and relative meanings.

On the other hand, the concept of subject and predicate refer to substances and accidents, essences and objective attributes and states of affairs (nafs al-amr). However, relation is something related to the one who relates, and does not refer to an objective instance. Likewise, judgment is the activity of the one who judges, and can only refer to a kind of unity or union between the instance of the subject and the instance of the predicate, but it itself does not have an instance in the external world. (Take note.)

For this reason it may be said that relating something to another thing is a mental activity, and the soul is the creative agent of the relation. Likewise, the judgment upon which the strength of a proposition rests and by means of which an assertive proposition becomes distinct from a mere collection of ideas is the action of the soul.

However, the idea of the subject or of the predicate does not depend on the action of the soul, and it is possible that it may appear in the mind involuntarily, although it requires a kind of attention of the soul.

It may be concluded that the dependence of relation and judgment on the soul is a 'productive dependence' (qiyam suduri); however, the dependence of the idea of the subject and predicate may be considered a 'dissolving dependence' (qiyam hululi), and their existence can be interpreted as a kind of 'impression in the mind.'

However, it must be noted that this impression and engraving is not like the drawing of a picture on paper or some other material subject; rather it is a quality of the soul, and is immaterial. For material accidents have a relation of position to their subjects, are ostensible by the senses, and are divisible subordinate to their subjects, while such things are not possible for the soul and things pertaining to it.

The productive dependence of relation and judgment [on the soul], though by itself not a reason for their being immaterial, nevertheless, observing that existence is parasitic on the existence of the subject and predicate, their immateriality is also established. In addition to this, their indivisibility is the best reason for their being immaterial.

The Immateriality of Perception

Reviewing the types of knowledge and observing the unity of knowledge by presence with the essence of the immaterial knower, and that knowledge, in the sense of belief and mental forms and concepts, is a psychic quality, and observing that relation and judgment play the role of intermediaries among them, the immateriality of all the types of knowledge becomes clear. In reality, their immateriality is proven by way of the immateriality of the knower.

However, there are also other ways of proving the immateriality of knowledge and perception, some of which will be mentioned. But first, we should point out that the terms knowledge and perception in these discussions are used as synonyms and include sensation, imagination and reasoning.

1. The first argument for the immateriality of perception, namely, 'the argument of the impossibility of impressing the larger in the smaller,' is famous, and one version of it is the following.

Sensory vision is the lowest kind of perception which is imagined to be material, and materialists have interpreted it as physio-chemical and physiological actions and reactions. However, by paying precise attention to this very kind of perception it becomes clear that the perception itself cannot be considered to be material, and the material actions and reactions can be accepted only as preparatory conditions, for we see large forms which cover an area of dozens of square meters which are several times larger than the area of our entire bodies, let alone the visual organs or the brain!

If these perceptual forms were material and projected in the organs of vision or other organs of the body, these forms could never be larger than the size of their locations, for material projection and impression without correspondence to a location is impossible. Observing that we see these perceptual forms within ourselves, we cannot but accept that they are related to a plane of the soul (martabah-ye mithali-ye nafs, the imaginal plane of the soul), and in this way, both their own immateriality and that of the soul are proven.

Some materialists have replied that what we see are little pictures like microfilms which come into existence in the nervous system, and that with the help of context and making relative comparisons we find out their real sizes.

But this nostrum will not solve the problem, for, first of all, knowing the size of that which is represented by a form is different from seeing a large form, and secondly, assuming that the visible form is very little, and that we enlarge it with skills obtained from experience and through the use of context and by making relative comparisons, as if they were put under a magnifying glass of the mind, finally we still find the enlarged form in the mind, and the above-mentioned reason would be exactly repeated regarding this mental or imaginary form.

2. Another argument is that if sensory perception were a kind of material action and reaction, it would

always occur whenever the material conditions were satisfied, while most of the time despite the satisfaction of the material conditions, the perception does not occur because of the attention of the soul to another matter.

Hence, it may be concluded that having perceptions depends on the attention of the soul and cannot be considered a kind of material action and reaction, even though these actions and reactions play an introductory role for the occurrence of perception, and as a result of the attachment of the soul to the body, the soul is in need of material grounds and preparatory conditions.

3. The third argument is that we can perceive two visible forms together and compare them with each other, so as to find, for example, that they are distinct, similar or identical to each other, or that one is larger than the other. Assuming that each of them is impressed in a part of the body, and that their perception is that very impression, this implies that every part of the perceptual organ perceives that very form impressed in itself and is unaware of the other forms.

So, what perceptual faculty perceives them together and compares them? If it is assumed that there is another material organ which perceives them together, the same problem will be repeated, for each material organ possesses parts, and if perception means the impression of forms in a material location each part will perceive the form impressed in it, and in conclusion, no comparison will be performed.

So, there is no other alternative but to accept that a simple perceptual faculty perceives both of them, and finds both of them with its own unity and simplicity. Such a faculty can be neither a material substance nor a material accident. Therefore, perception will not be the impression of a form in a material location. With this argument, it is also proved that perception and the perceiver are both immaterial.

4. The fourth argument is that we sometimes perceive something and remember it after the passage of many years. If it is assumed that past perception is a special sort of material effect in one of the organs of the body, then after the passage of dozens of years it would have to be erased or changed, especially given the fact that the cells of the body change every so many years. Even if the cells remained, due to metabolism and the absorption of new nutrients, they will have changed, so how can we remember exactly that very form, or compare a new form with it, and perceive their similarities?

It is possible that it will be said that every cell or every new material part inherits the effects of the previous parts and retains them. But even under this assumption the question will remain as to what faculty perceives the unity or similarity of the previous and present forms.

It is clear that without this comparison and perception, remembrance and recognition could not take place. This argument becomes clearer with attention to the doctrines of substantial motion and the continual passing away of material things and in one respect is similar to the argument given in Lesson Forty-Four, where scientific and empirical premises were employed for the establishment of the immateriality of the soul.

Lesson 50: The Union of the Knower and the Known

Introduction

In his books the Shifa[1] and the Isharat,[2] Shaykh al-Ra'is (Ibn Sina) quotes several Greek philosophers to the effect that when a rational existent apprehends something it becomes united with it. He also reports that Porphyry has written an essay on the topic. However, he himself criticizes this theory and takes it to be impossible.

On the other hand, in his Asfar and other works, Sadr al-Muta'allihin confirms it and insists on the correctness of this theory, and he generalizes it to include all kinds of knowledge, even sensory perception.

This strange disagreement between the two great philosophers on this topic naturally arouses one's curiosity and interest in solving the problem and deciding between the two sides of the conflict. For this reason, at the end of this section we devote a lesson to this topic.

The Controversy

In the previous lesson we learned that in presentational knowledge of the self there is no numerical difference or distinction between the knower and the known. For this reason it should be called the unity (wahdat) of knowledge, knower and known. It was indicated that this knowledge by presence is accepted by the Peripatetics, including Ibn Sina.

Hence, there can be no disagreement about the union (ittihad) of the knower and the known concerning this case, especially as the expression 'union,' as opposed to the expression 'unity' (wahdat), is used in places where there is a kind of numerical difference and duality, though in the knowledge of the self there is no sort of numerical difference whatsoever, except for conceptual respect (i'tibar).

Apparently, Ibn Sina holds that those who accept the union of knower and known confine the discussion to intellection, as opposed to imagination (takhayyul) and sensation. At the most it can be extended to knowledge by presence, for in the language of the philosophers, the term 'intellect' ('aql) and its respectivals are used repeatedly with regard to knowledge by presence.

However, Sadr al-Muta'allihin expanded the scope of the discussion to include knowledge and perception without qualification, including acquired as well as presential knowledge, and including reasoning, imagination and sensation, and in all these cases he subscribed to the union of knower and

known.

Explanation of the Topic

Before dealing with the core of the problem, the concept of ‘union’ (ittihad) must be made clear. We must see precisely what is intended by those who accept the union of the rational agent (‘aqil) with the intelligible (ma‘qul) or the union of the knower with the known. Perhaps the correct perception of this meaning will provide considerable help in solving the problem.

The union of two existents will be either a union with respect to their whatnesses or with respect to their existences, or with respect to the existence of one and the whatness of the other.

However, the union of two complete whatnesses implies a transformation in whatness which is a contradiction, for the assumption of a complete whatness is the assumption of a specific conceptual mold which does not correspond to any other conceptual mold, and the union of two complete whatnesses would imply the correspondence of two distinct molds, such as the union of a circle and a triangle, to use an example of sensibles to illustrate the case regarding intelligibles.

The union of a complete specific whatness with an incomplete whatness (genus and difference), according to Aristotle’s apparatus of genus and difference, is unobjectionable and ubiquitous, but this has no relation to intellection and perception. In intellection, such union does not occur. In addition sometimes man intellects a whatness completely distinct from the whatness of man and such that there is no shared whatish property between them.

Therefore, if one were to believe that in perception the whatness of the perceiving existent becomes united with the whatness of the perceived existent, and, for example, that the whatness of man becomes one with the whatness of a tree or an animal, this would be contradictory and impossible.

Likewise, the union of the existence of the perceiver with the whatness of the perceived and the reverse are also impossible, and even if the union between existence and whatness is in some sense correct, it is the union of the existence of a single existent with its own whatness, not with the whatness of another existent.

Hence, the only hypothesis that can be maintained regarding the union of the subject and object of intellection is that of the union of their existences. Now we must see whether the union between two existences is possible or not. If it is possible, in how many ways can it occur?

Types of Union of Existence

The union of two or more entified existences, in the sense of a kind of dependence or interdependence between them, is possible, and may occur in several ways.

a) The union of substance and accident, in view of the fact that an accident is dependent on a substance and cannot be independent of its subject. This union may be more firmly established on the basis the position of those who hold that an accident is an aspect or level of the existence of the substance.

b) The union of matter and form, for the form cannot be separated from its locus and continue independently with its own existence. This kind of union is sometimes generalized to body and soul, given that it is not possible for the soul to come about without a body, although it may survive independently.

c) The union of several matters in the shadow of a unitary form to which they are attached, such as the union of the elements which compose a plant or animal. This kind of union is really an accidental union, and a true union would only be obtained with the union of each element with the form.

d) The union of prime matter, assumed to lack any sort of actuality, with the form which grants it actuality. Sometimes this kind of union is considered to be a real union. However, with the rejection of prime matter as a entified substance lacking actuality, there is no room left for this kind of union.

e) Another kind of union can be held to occur between two effects of a single emanating cause, considering each of them to be united with the cause, such that separation between them is not possible, although calling such relations 'union' is not without imprecision.

e. The union between the existence-granting cause and its effect which is the relation itself and dependence on it. There is a specific sort of gradation between such a cause and its effects. This sort of union, according to the fundamentality of existence and its gradation, is called the 'union of the real with the diluted' (ittihad haqiqah wa raqiqah).

It must be noted that the union under discussion is a union obtained as a result of perception, and this is the union of the knower with the existence of the known-in-itself (ma'lum bi al-dhat), that is, the very perceptual form which occurs in the mind, not union with an objective existent. Therefore, the union of matter and form, or objective substance and accident is irrelevant to this problem.

Considering the kinds of union and those philosophers hold acquired knowledge to be a psychic quality, it is easy to accept the first kind of union, and, naturally, those like Ibn Sina would not deny this sort of union.

However, Sadr al- Muta'allihin did not like this kind of union and he tried to prove another kind similar to the union of matter and form; that is, he considers the relation between the soul and perceptual forms to be like that of prime matter and its forms. Just as the actuality of prime matter is obtained in the shadow of its union with a form, actual intellection occurs for the soul in the shadow of union with intellectual forms.

A Review of the Theory of adr al-Muta'allihin

In order to make clear the theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, an excerpt from his own words is presented here:

The existence of the form which is actually intellected is the same as the existence of the intellecting faculty ('aqiliyyah) for the soul (and in technical terms, its existence-in-itself is the same as its existence-for-the-other), and if it is supposed that the perceptual form has another existence, and that the relation of it to the perceiving existent in only the relation of an object and its locus, then one would have to be able to posit that each of them has an existence independent of the other, while the intellected form does not have an existence apart from this very aspect of being intellected, an aspect which is its very essence itself, whether or not the one who intellects it is outside of this essence.

Previously we said that correlatives (and among them the subject and object of intellection) are partners with respect to the degree of their existence. This judgment also holds for sensible forms.

...Others say: Psychic substance has a passive state in relation to intellectual form and that intellection is nothing other than this passivity. However, how can something essentially devoid of intellectual light perceive the intellectual form that essentially possesses the property of being intellected? Is it possible for a blind eye to see something?!

...In reality, the actual intellecting faculty ('aqiliyyah) of the soul is like the actualization of prime matter by means of a corporeal form, and just as matter in and of itself is not determinate, the soul in and of itself does not intellect, and becomes an actual subject of intellection in the shadow of union with the intellectual form.[3]

There are several controversial points in this explanation:

1. Regarding his statement, "if the relation between the perceptual form and the perceiver is a relation of an object and its locus, then it must be possible to consider separate existences for each of them," it may be asked what is meant by 'separate existences.' If what is meant is that the perceptual form can exist without a location, this implication would be incorrect because no accident or form which is in need of a location can occur without it.

If what is meant is that the intellect can consider them separately, this is also possible in the case of perceptual forms. In addition to this, Sadr al-Muta'allihin himself considers the existence of accidents to be aspects of the existence of substance, and he does not accept their independent existence. So, what would be wrong with considering knowledge a kind of accident and an aspect of the existence of the knower?

2. Regarding his claim, "Being actually intellected is an essential property of intellectual forms, whether or not there is an intellect outside of its essence," it must be said that the terms 'being known'

and ‘being intellected’ are relational, and the supposition of one without the supposition of an existent which is knower is impossible. At most it may be said that these two terms may at times apply to a single existent, such as knowledge of the self, and sometimes the term knower corresponds to an existent outside of the essence of the known.

The mere applicability of the term ‘object of intellection’ (ma‘qul) to something is no reason to suppose that the term ‘subject of intellection’ (‘aqil) is also true of the whatness or existence of that very thing.

In other words, the additional concept of ‘object of intellection’ cannot be considered to be essential for something (whether ‘essential’ is understood in accordance with the Isagoge, or in accordance with the Kitab al-Burhan [Aristotle’s logic]) so that with the help of the principle of ‘the equality of correlatives’ the property of being ‘subject of intellection’ may be established for its essence.

Moreover, a requirement of the above-mentioned principle, as Shaykh al-Ra’is (Ibn Sina) states in his Ta‘liqat, is ‘equality in implication, not in the level of existence. ’[4] It may be concluded that the actuality of the property of being an object of intellection for a perceptual form does not require anything beyond that it possess an actual intellecting subject, whether in its own essence or outside of it.

3. As to the analogy between the passivity of the soul for perceptual forms and a blind eye, it must be said that, firstly, it is possible for a person to consider the soul the agent of the perceptual form, as in the cases of judgment and abstracted concepts and all logical and philosophical secondary intelligibles; secondly, why not compare the soul with a seeing eye which obtains actual vision when faced with a visible object?

As for the analogy between the soul and prime matter, according to the accepted theory, which denies prime matter that lacks actuality, there is no need for further explanation of it.

Inquiry into a Problem

Careful attention to the points mentioned makes clear that the relation between the knower and the known cannot be explained in one way for all cases; rather, giving due consideration to the kinds of knowledge involved, each case must be reviewed separately to determine the relation. We now list the conclusions reached thus far:

1. In the case of presentational knowledge of an essence, the knowledge, the knower, and the known have a single existence, and there is no sort of numerical difference to be found among them, except according to differences in rational respects. If the expression ‘union’ (ittihad) is applied in such cases it is because of the numerical differences among the respects suggested; otherwise, we would have to use the expression ‘unity’ (wahdat). And there is general agreement on the unity of the knower and the known in this case.

2. What is meant by those who believe in the union of the knower and the known is not the union of the

knower and the accidentally known (ma'lum bi al- 'aradh), but the union of the knower and the known-by-essence (ma'lum bi al-dhat; i.e., the perceptual form).

3. Likewise, what they mean is not the union of the whatnesses of the knower and known, for this would require a change in whatness, a contradiction in terms.

4. The union of the existence of one thing with the whatness of another is also obviously incorrect.

5. In the knowledge by presence that the emanating cause has of its effect and vice versa, a 'union of the real with the diluted,' or, in other words, a graded union of levels of existence, is obtained, for the existence of one of them is the very relation and dependence on the other and is not independent in itself.

6. The knowledge by presence that two immaterial effects have of one another, assuming that there is such knowledge, can be considered an accidental union between the knower and the known, for each of them has an essential union with its emanating cause.

7. In acquired knowledge of the type which is considered to be the action of the soul, in which the soul is considered to be an agent by self-disclosure (f'il bi al-tajjali), an agent by agreement (f'il bi al-ridha) or an agent by foreknowledge (f'il bi al-'inayah), the union here may also be taken to be a kind of graded union of levels of existence.

8. In the type of acquired knowledge which is considered to be a quality of the soul, the sort of union which holds between that which is known-by- essence—a specific quality of the soul—and the substance of the soul is one between a substance and accident.

1. Cf., Al-Shifa, 'Tabi'at,' fann 6, maqalah 5, bab 6.
2. Cf., Isharat, namat 7.
3. Cf., Asfar, Vol. 3, pp. 313-320; Vol. 6, pp. 165-168.
4. Cf., Ta'liqat, pp. 76, 91, 95

Part 6: The Immutable And The Changing

Lesson 51: The Immutable and the Changing
Lesson 52: The Potential and the Actual
Lesson 53: A Continuation of the Discussion of the Potential and the Actual
Lesson 54: Generation and Corruption
Lesson 55: Motion
Lesson 56: Properties of Motion
Lesson 57: Divisions of Motion

Lesson 58: Motion in Accidents
Lesson 59: Motion in Substance
Lesson 60: Further Discussion of Substantial Motion

Lesson 51: The Immutable and the Changing

Introduction

Among the primary divisions which can be made for existence is that between the immutable and the changing. The immutable includes the Necessary Existent and completely immaterial beings. The changing includes all material existents and souls that are attached to matter.

Changes may be divided into two kinds: sudden and gradual. The gradual is that which is called 'motion' in philosophical terminology, and opposed to this is the concept of being stationary, which is its relative complement ('adam malikah); that is, it is not the case that everything which lacks motion necessarily has the attribute of being stationary, but those things which have the capacity for motion but in actuality are not in a state of motion will be stationary.

Therefore, completely immaterial existents cannot be called stationary. From this, the difference between the concept of being stationary and that of being immutable is clear: the former is the relative complement of motion, while the latter is the contradictory of change.

In this part, we will first give an explanation of the immutable and the changing and the types of change and alteration, and then we will discuss motion, prove the existence of motion, and present the implications and kinds of motion. Along the way we shall explain the concepts of potentiality and actuality, and the relation between these and change and motion. Finally, this part, which is the last part on first philosophy, will be brought to an end with a discussion of substantial motion.

An Explanation Regarding Change and Immutability

In Arabic, the word for change, taghayyur, is derived from the word for other, ghayr, and means becoming another, or becoming different. Change is a concept whose abstraction requires the consideration of two things or states, or two parts of one thing, one of which vanishes and is replaced by the other.

Even the obliteration of something may be called a change since its existence changes to nonexistence, that is, it becomes annihilated, although nonexistence has no reality, and temporal coming into existence (huduth) also can be called change, for the previous nonexistence is changed into existence.

Alteration and change in state (tahawwul) are also close to change, but since tahawwul is derived from hall (state), it is more suitable to confine its use to changes in state. From this it may be observed that the concept of change is not a whatish concept for which genus and difference may be given, and it is only with difficulty that a clearer intellectual concept may be found which could be used to explain it, and for this reason it must be considered a self-evident concept.

Likewise, the concept of immutability, which is the contradictory of change, does not need any definition or explanation, and since it is abstracted from a single entified existence, it may be considered a positive concept and change a negative one. Perhaps for this sort of opposite abstracted concepts, either of them may be considered positive and the other negative.

The existence of the changing is also self-evident, and at the very least every person finds changes within his own internal states by presentational knowledge. However, immutable existence, which is not the object of any sort of change or alteration, must be established by proof. And in the previous part we became acquainted with some such proofs.

Types of Change

Given the breadth of the concept of change, various kinds of change may be posited:

1. The appearance of a substantial existent without previous matter, and in technical terms, creation (ibda'i). Instances of this posit is the first material existent, for those who accept the temporal beginning of the material universe.

2. The complete destruction of a substantial existent and an instance of it is the last material existent, according to the position of those who believe that the material universe will have a temporal end.

3. The complete destruction of a substantial existent and the appearance of a new substantial existent in its place. The occurrences of this posit is considered impossible by most philosophers, and at the very least it may be said that among ordinary phenomena no instances of this sort of change are to be found.

4. The appearance of a substantial existent as an actual part of another substantial existent. A clear instance of this is vegetable forms, according to the position of those who consider vegetable forms to be substantial, and their materials to be actual existents.

5. The destruction of a part of a substantial existent without being replaced by another part, such as the death of a plant and its decomposition, according to the above-mentioned position.

6. The destruction of an actual part of a substantial existent and the appearance of another part in place of it, a clear instance of which is 'generation and corruption' such as the transformation of one component into another.

7. The destruction of a potential part of a substance and the appearance of another potential part in place of it. An instance of this posit is the substantial motion of bodies, which incessantly occurs with the destruction of one part and its replacement by another, parts which become existent by fluid existence and in which no actual part is to be found. In future lessons this will be further explained.

8. The coming about of a new accident in a substantial subject, of which there are numerous instances.

9. The destruction of an accident without another accident taking its place, such as the fading of the color of a body and its becoming colorless.

10. The destruction of an accident and the appearance of a different accident in its place, an instance of which is the succession of contrary accidents, such as the colors black and white.

11. The destruction of an actual part of an accident. An instance of this is the reduction of the number of something, according to those who consider number to be a real accident possessing actual parts.

12. The addition of an actual part to an accident, such as the augmentation of the number of something according to the above-mentioned view.

13. The destruction of a potential part of an accident and the appearance of another potential part, such as all accidental motion.

14. The attachment of one substantial existent to another, such as the attachment of the soul to the body and its coming to life.

15. The detachment of one substantial existent from another, such as the death of an animal or human being.

Observing the features of the above-mentioned types of change, it is clear that only the seventh and the thirteenth types are gradual and are examples of motion. The other types must be considered instantaneous changes, for between the prior and latter conditions there is a specific boundary, and there is no temporal gap between them, although it is possible for each of the above- mentioned conditions to possess a kind of gradualness.

For example, a change in the temperature of water occurs gradually, although the transformation of water into steam occurs in a single moment, or a zygote gradually becomes complete, but a spirit becomes attached to it in a single moment. Given this point, changes can be divided into two general types: instantaneous and gradual.

Another point is that for every kind of gradual change (types seven and thirteen) three subtypes can be considered: one is that in which the earlier parts are like the later parts, such a motion at a constant speed without acceleration; the second subtype is that in which the later parts are more intense and stronger than the earlier parts, such as intensifying motion and speeding up; and the third subtype is that

in which the later parts are weaker than the earlier parts as in decelerating motion and slowing down. However, there is some controversy about this which will be indicated later.

The Positions of the Philosophers Regarding the Types of Change

A review of the statements of the philosophers regarding each of the mentioned types of change would take too long; however, five positions in this area may be indicated.

1. The well-known position of the philosophers who consider the appearance of every material phenomenon to be necessarily preceded by matter and time, and as for the material world, they hold that it does not have a temporal beginning or end, and for this reason they deny the first three types of change.

2. The position of those who hold that numbers are respectival is naturally that changes in number are not real changes, and this position was previously confirmed. Therefore, changes of types eleven and twelve must be considered respectival.

3. The position of those who do not consider motion to be gradual, and who imagine all changes to be instantaneous. Accordingly they deny the seventh and thirteenth types. Since the concept of change is an abstract concept, and has no example other than prior and later existence and nonexistence, and nonexistence is pure nullity, for this reason they considered existence to be equal to immutability, such as some of the Eleatics of ancient Greece.

4. The position of those who accept the existence of motion but would restrict it to accidents and as a result they deny the seventh type of motion.

5. The position of Sadr al-Muta'allihin and others who believe in substantial motion.

Given that which was stated in Lesson Forty-Seven about number, where it was proved that number is respectival, there is no further need for discussion of changes in number. However, regarding the other positions, several problems should be discussed.

The first problem is that of whether material phenomena must necessarily originate in previously existing matter, so that it would follow that the chain of material events stretches from pre-eternity infinitely and without beginning, or whether they must originate in an existent which is at the head of a chain of material phenomena so that the chain of material events has a temporal beginning.

The second problem is whether motion, as a continuous gradual thing, exists in the external world or whether that which is called motion is a collection of fixed things which are brought about in succession and destroyed, so that the mind of man abstracts the concept of motion from their collection. In other words, are all changes instantaneous, or are there also gradual changes?

The third problem, after establishing that there is motion, is whether gradual change occurs only in accidents, or whether there can also be motion, or motions, in substance itself.

Lesson 52: The Potential and the Actual

Introduction

Man has always been a witness to changes and alterations in bodies and in souls attached to matter, so that it may be claimed that there is no material existent nor existent attached to matter which is not subject to some kind of change or alteration. In the appropriate place the necessity of substantial motion will be proved for all material things, implying that changes in their accidents are subordinate to substantial motion.

On the other hand, the scope of the alteration of an existent into another existent such that each of them possesses an independent whatness becomes so broad that it may be supposed that each material existent can change into another material existent.

Hence, from the earliest times it has been held that there is a single principle for the world which changes into different things with the transformations which occur in this principle. Many philosophers have held that the only exceptions to this doctrine are the celestial bodies. In other words, the subjects to which this doctrine applies are limited to elemental bodies.

Aside from the invalidity of the assumption of unchangeable celestial spheres (aflak), by rational proof one cannot deny the possibility that there might be a kind of material existent in some unknown corner of the world which cannot be changed into another material existent, although this possibility seems extremely weak and farfetched. We know that in modern physics the commonly accepted theory is that matter and energy and even types of energy can change into one another.

Despite the generality of alteration in relation to all material things, and the breadth of the scope of changes, practical experience shows that not every thing may be directly changed into anything else. Even if all material existents could be changed into one another, this could never be accomplished directly and without mediation.

For example, a stone cannot directly change into a plant or an animal. In order to be transformed into a plant or animal it must go through several stages and alterations must take place until it is prepared for such transformations.

Such thoughts have led philosophers to think that only an existent can change into another existent

when it possesses the potentiality of the existence of the other. In this way the term potential and actual appeared in philosophy, and change came to be interpreted as emergence from potentiality to actuality. If this occurs instantaneously without a temporal gap it is called 'generation and corruption.' If it occurs gradually and with temporal gaps, it is called motion.

An Explanation of the Concepts of the Potential and the Actual

The word potential (quwwah), whose literal meaning is power and ability, has various technical meanings in the sciences, and in philosophy it is used in several senses. The first is the potentiality of an agent who is the source of the production of an action. It seems that this is the first sense which was noticed by philosophers and whose relation to 'action' is clear.

It was then imagined that just as prior to performing a deed the agent has the ability to accomplish it, matter must also possess ability, readiness for acceptance and passivity in advance. In this way a second meaning appeared for potential. This can be called passive potential (quwwah infi'ali), and in this discussion it is this sense which is intended.

The third meaning of potential is resistance to an external factor, such as the resistance of the body to disease, and the opposite of this is called lack of potential (la quwwah), and these are two kinds of dispositional qualities.

It should be noted that the use of 'potential' by philosophers is more general than disposition (isti'dad), for the term potential is also applicable to substance, contrary to disposition which is a kind of accident. However, it was previously mentioned that substantial potential (prime matter) is not provable, and disposition is also an abstract concept, not an essential concept.

Likewise, the concept of passive potential is abstracted by the comparison of two existents, prior and posterior, since the prior existent lacks the posterior existent and it is possible for the prior to possess the later. Therefore, at the very least a part of the prior existent must remain and have a kind of composition and union with the posterior existent.

Contrary to this, the expression 'actuality' is used as a result of abstraction from occurrence of the posterior existent. Hence, potentiality and actuality are two abstracted concepts neither of which is to be considered an essential concept.

Sometimes the expression actual (bil-fi'l) is used in a broader sense to include even existents which have no previous potentiality, and it is in this sense that complete immaterial existents are called actual existents.

We should remind the reader that in some philosophical discussions, the existence of something shared between the potential and actual existents is neglected, and, for example, the earlier parts of time and motion are called potential in relation to the later parts, and it seems that this usage is not free from

imprecision.

The Division of Existents into the Actual and the Potential

If the expression 'actual' is taken in its general sense which includes immaterial existents, then another primary division of existents may be considered between actual existents and potential existents. The potential existents are to be found among materials, while actual existence embraces immaterial existents and the actual aspects of material things.

However, it must be observed that this division is similar in some respects to the division of existents into causes and effects or objective existents and mental existents, and not like the division of existence into the immaterial and the material.

This is explained by the fact that sometimes a division is made by adding two or more absolute (nafsi, i.e., not relative) concepts to that which is divided so that the subdivisions do not overlap, as in the division of existents into the immaterial and material; that is, a material existent can never in any way be considered an immaterial existent and the immaterial can never be viewed as material.

In other cases, a division is made through the use of relative concepts, and therefore it is possible for some things in one subdivision to be considered as being in the other, as in the division between cause and effect, that is, an existent may be considered a cause with respect to one thing and with respect to another an effect. The same is the case for mental concepts which are called mental existents with regard to the standard of objectivity, but are considered objective existents in so far as they exist in the realm of the mind.

The division of existents into the actual and the potential is of the same sort, for a potential existent in relation to an actuality which it can possess is called potential, even though with respect to the actuality which it possesses at present it will be an actual existent.

Hence, the aspects of potentiality and actuality are not entified aspects, and their concepts are not to be considered absolute (nafsi). Rather they are relational concepts which refer to intellectual and comparative aspects. This is an important point which we indicated in our criticism of the proof of the Aristotelians for prime matter.

Another issue is that there is a difference between the division of existence into cause and effect and the division into the mental and the objective, for in the division of cause and effect, a cause may be considered which is in no way any sort of an effect, such as the Sacred Divine Essence, and one can also imagine an effect which is completely free of causal agency.

However, other than these, existents will be causes in one respect and effects in another. This is contrary to the case for the division of existents into the objective and the mental, for no existent can be found which has no kind of objectivity whatsoever, but rather all mental existents, aside from the fact that

they refer to other things, are objective existents.

Now the question will be raised as to which of these two sorts of divisions is that between actual and potential existents. The answer is that the Aristotelians assumed that this division was like that between cause and effect, for they viewed complete immaterial existents to be actual without any potentiality, prime matter as potentiality without any actuality, and bodies as possessing aspects of both potentiality and actuality.

However, those who do not accept a matter which lacks all actuality, as is required by the principle of 'the equivalence of actuality and existence,' will therefore view the division as entirely similar to that between the mental and the objective.

The Relation between the Potential and the Actual

As we have learned, the concepts of potentiality and actuality are abstracted concepts, and aside from the sources from which they are abstracted, they have no other entified instances. Hence, the relation between the potential and the actual is really a relation between two existents which are the sources of the abstraction of these concepts. In other words, what should be considered is the relation between the potential and actual existents.

This relation occurs in one of two forms: first, when a potential existent remains completely within the actual existent, and in this case, the actual existent will be more perfect than the potential one, as the plant is more perfect than the soil of which it is brought into existence; second, when only a part of a potential existent remains within the actual existent, in which case it is possible that the destroyed part is replaced by another part which regarding its level of existence is equal to, less perfect than, or more perfect than the previous one, and as a result, in some changes, the actual existent will be less perfect, or equal to the potential existent.

To be more precise, a potential existent is really the same part that remains, and therefore, the actual existent is always more perfect than or equal to the part that is really the potential existent. Some have imagined that the potential existent is always less perfect than the actual existent, because the potential aspect is an aspect of lacking or absence while the aspect of actuality is the aspect of possession and presence.

When a potential existent is transformed into an actual existent it comes to possess something existent which it previously lacked. On this basis they have denied equivalent and declining motions. On the other hand, the return from actuality to potentiality has been considered impossible, because return is a kind of change, and all change is a transformation of earlier potential into later actuality, but not the reverse.

From this it has been concluded that if a spirit obtains all its perfections so that it is not potential with

respect to any further perfection, it will leave the body, and in other words, natural death will occur, and the spirit will never return to the body, for the return of such a spirit to the body would be a return from actuality to potentiality.

Given the explanation of the relation between the potential and the actual existent, it is clear that the aspects of potentiality and actuality are not two entified aspects between which a comparison can be made.

However, the actual existent, that is, the collection of that which remains of the previous existent plus the actuality which is newly obtained, will be more perfect than the part which remains. But it is not necessary that the totality of the actual existent will always be more perfect than the totality of the potential existent, just as one cannot consider water or steam to be more perfect than the other, although they are alternatively transformed into each other.

Regarding equivalent and declining motions, these will be discussed in the appropriate place.[1] Regarding the return of the spirit to the body, this has no relation to the return from actuality to potentiality, because the potential has temporal priority to the actual, and with the passage of time it too passes and does not return, regardless of whether the past existence was more perfect, less perfect, or equal to the later existence. In reality, body has the potentiality for the renewed acceptance of the spirit, and with attachment to it, it obtains a new actuality.

Indeed, this mistake originates in the assumption that the aspect of potentiality is the whatness of or a level of the previous existence, for this reason it is supposed that if the level of existence of the later existent were the same as the previous level, a return from actuality to potentiality would occur, while if the later level were weaker than the previous, a return from potentiality to potentiality would occur.

In case the source of abstraction of potentiality is the previous existent itself (and not a kind or level of its existence), the previous existence itself passes with the passage of time and has no possibility for return at all, and the source of the abstraction of the actuality is the later existent itself, regardless of whether the level of its existence and its specific whatness is equal or equivalent to, more perfect than, or less perfect than that of the previous existent.

1. Cf., Lesson Fifty-Seven.

Lesson 53: A Continuation of the Discussion of

the Potential and the Actual

The Correspondence of Potentiality and Actuality in the Case of Change

Focusing on the concepts of potentiality and actuality, it is clear that three conditions are necessary for their abstraction:

1. Two existences are to be compared with one another. Therefore, nothingness cannot be considered an instance of potentiality or actuality.

2. One of the two existences must be temporally prior to the other in order for potentiality to be ascribed to it. Therefore, two simultaneous existents cannot be potential or actual with regard to each other.

3. The potential existent, or at least a part of it, must remain in the actual existent. For this reason, an existent which is completely destroyed cannot be considered to be potential in relation to a later existent.

Given these points, it is clear that the first of the types of change [mentioned in Lesson Fifty–Two] is not a kind of transformation from potentiality to actuality, because the earlier condition is nothingness while the potential is to be abstracted from existence.

Likewise, the second type of change is irrelevant to potentiality and actuality because the earlier condition is nothingness and actuality is not abstracted from nothingness.

In the third type, although one existent replaces another, since there is no common factor between them; one cannot be considered potential with regard to the other.

In the fourth type, the earlier existent is entirely potential with respect to the later existent and remains within it; hence, the actual existent is more perfect than the potential existent.

In the fifth type, the actual existent is less perfect than the potential existent, because only part of the earlier existent remains and nothing is added to it.

In the sixth type, the superiority, inferiority or equality in perfection of the actual existent in comparison to the potential existent depends upon whether the part which is substituted for the destroyed part is more, less, or equally perfect in its level of existence.

However, in the seventh type, potentiality and actuality are the beginning and end of motion and motion is this gradual progression from potentiality to actuality, and in the context of motion, actual parts do not exist so that some may be considered potential with respect to others.

However, regarding the fact that motion is continuous, and whatever is continuous may be infinitely divided into parts, potential parts of it may be taken into consideration in the sense that if, for example, a single motion were divided into two halves, in such a way that a specific midway point appeared, the amount of each of the two parts of the motion would be equal to one half of the amount of the entire motion.

Particular attention should be paid to the fact that this way of viewing potential existence for the parts of motion, is other than the way the potentiality of an earlier part was viewed with respect to a later part.

The same point applies to type thirteen (accidental motion), although normally the expressions 'actual' and 'potential' are applied to substantial existents, even though potentiality as a dispositional quality (kayf isti'dadi) is considered to be a kind of accident.

Types eight, nine and ten may be considered like types one, two and three, with the difference that in types eight, nine and ten substantial subjects may be considered to be potential with regard to the attribution of accidents. Likewise types eleven and twelve as well as fourteen and fifteen may be considered analogous to types four and five.

It may be concluded that for all the types of change except for the first three, the changed thing may be considered potential and that into which it changes may be considered actual. Indeed, the basis of the position of those who deny the existence of these three types is that they consider change to be equal to a transfer from the potential to the actual. Therefore it is necessary to investigate this problem to see whether instances can be found for the three above- mentioned posits.

Infinite Regresses of Material Events

In the language of philosophy, it is well known that every material phenomenon is preceded by matter and time. A general requirement of this principle is that the appearance of a material existent from pure nothingness is considered to be impossible. Accordingly, the first and third of the fifteen types of change will be denied.

Since prime matter is considered to possess infinite potentiality, an infinite regress of events extending into the future is considered to be possible, the occurrence of which is proven on the basis of absolute divine grace and the absence of stinginess in the higher sources (mabadi 'aliyah), which imply the denial of the second type of change.

On the other hand, the mutakallimin and some of the philosophers, such as Mir Damad, hold that the material world has a temporal beginning. In order to refute the hypothesis of an infinite regress of events into the past they rely on the claim that an infinite regress is invalid. Likewise, the above-mentioned claim is used to prove the temporal end of the material world.

Accordingly, this problem is related to the problem of the temporal creation of the world, even though

there is no implication between them, and it is possible that one might hold that the world has no temporal beginning while at the same time holding that it is not impossible for a material existent to appear without a preexistent matter.

It is also possible for one to hold that the material world will exist eternally, without considering it impossible for a material phenomenon to be destroyed entirely, positing the infinite series of events from pre–eternity to post–eternity on the basis of constant divine generosity.

Here we will first investigate the principle of 'the necessity of the priority of matter for every material phenomenon' and then we will refer to the problem of the temporal eternity and creation of the world.

The Principle of the Necessity of the Priority of Matter to Material Events

It was previously indicated that on the basis of innumerable observations, various transformations are always taking place in material things, and new phenomena replace the previous phenomena, so that the relation of potentiality and actuality occurs among them.

However, complete induction with regard to all material events is not possible, for no human being has existed from the beginning of the world and no one has yet experienced the end of the world. One cannot discover the definite cause of the priority of matter from the cases which have been observed and consider this principle to be an empirical one. For this reason, philosophers have sought to establish this principle rationally, as with the following proof.

Prior to becoming an existent, every material phenomenon has a possibility for existence; if there were not such a possibility the assumed phenomenon would be either a necessary or an impossible existent. Since this possibility is not substantial, there must be a substance to which the possibility is attributed, and this is what is called 'matter.' So, the priority of matter for every material phenomenon is necessary.

Several aspects of this explanation are debatable.

1. In this explanation it is assumed that for every material phenomenon there is a previous time for which the possibility of the existence of the assumed phenomenon is proved, while time is one of the dimensions of material existence and does not have an existence separate from that of material existents. If the series of events had a temporal beginning, there would be no time prior to it.

2. With the denial that a material event can be a necessary or an impossible existent, its contingency is established, and this is an essential contingency which is abstracted from the whatness of a thing. It is not something entified which could be the subject of predication.

3. In Lesson Forty–Eight it was proved that dispositional possibility is also something abstracted from the availability of conditions of existence and nonexistence prior to the occurrence of the phenomenon.

However, for the first material phenomenon no prior conditions can be considered; and in the discussions of cause and effect it was shown that material causes and conditions can only be established through experience, and we do not have sufficient experience to establish the necessity of prior conditions for all phenomena.

The Temporal Creation of the Material World

The problem of the temporal creation of the material world is one of the most controversial problems of philosophy, which has always been a topic of conflict and debate. The mutakallimin were especially insistent on proving it and considered it to be implied by the principle of causality. As was indicated in the discussions of cause and effect, they considered newness (huduth) to be the criterion for needing a cause.

On the other hand, most of the philosophers believed in the temporal pre- eternity of the material world, and have given reasons for their own views, including reliance on the above-mentioned principle whose inadequacy has become clear.

Another reason given by them is based on the pre-eternity of divine grace and the absence of stinginess in the higher sources. However, this reason will be useful only in case the possibility of the pre-eternity of the world is proved and its occurrence dependent on divine grace. Hence, those who believe in the temporal creation of the world have tried to prove the impossibility of the pre- eternity of the world, and they have tried to reject the possibility of an infinite series of events extending into the past by means of the invalidity of infinite regresses.

Philosophers accept the proofs for the impossibility of infinite regresses only in cases in which the links of the regresses exist simultaneously together and a true ordering exists among them. Therefore, they allow the infinity of successive events and exclude simultaneous events which are not truly ordered from the proofs of the impossibility of infinite regresses.

With the acceptance of these two conditions, Mir Damad considered the collection of successive events in the [meta-temporal] realm of perpetuity (dahr) to be sufficient for an infinite regress proof. For this reason, he has denied the possibility of a series of events extending infinitely into the past. If the collection of the links of the regress in perpetuity is sufficient, then one can also deny a series of events extending infinitely into the future.

But the main point is that there is controversy about proofs for the impossibility of infinite regresses produced with links other than true causes, but this is not the occasion to pursue the matter further. For this reason, it is extremely difficult to set up a proof either for the possibility or impossibility of an infinite regress of events, whether extending into the past or the future.

It may be concluded that although divine effusion (faydh, grace) does not require any sort of limitation,

the bestowal of divine effusion hinges on the capability and possibility of receiving it. Perhaps the material world does not have the capability for receiving pre-eternal and post-eternal effusion. But just as philosophers have not considered limitations on the volume of the world to be incompatible with the extension of divine effusion, its temporal finitude must not be considered incompatible with the constancy of divine effusion.

In truth, we have not found a rational proof neither for the temporal nor the spatial finitude of the world, nor have we found one for the absence of temporal or spatial finitude. For this reason, we place this problem in the 'court of probable possibility'[1] until we see a definitive reason in favor of one side or the other.

1. An allusion to the advice of Ibn Sina at the end of his Isharat: "Beware that your smartness and detachment from the vulgar do not make you go on denying everything, for that is rashness and weakness. Your strong rejection of that whose clarity is not yet made evident to you is no less a mistake than your strong belief in that whose evidence does not lie in your hands.
Rather you must hold on to the line of suspending judgment—even if you are disturbed by the denieal of what your hearing recognizes as true—as long as its impossibility is not demonstrable for you. Thus, it is appropriate that you relegate such a thing to the court of possibility, unless you have firm proof otherwise." Cf., Shams Inati, Ibn Sina and Mysticism (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), p. 107.

Lesson 54: Generation and Corruption

Introduction

Among the fifteen kinds of change which we assumed, there were three of them (kinds one through three) whose existence is doubtful. We were unable to offer a definite opinion about them. Two other kinds (the eleventh and twelfth) depend on the increasing and decreasing of number, and these were considered to be respectival, and not in need of any further discussion.

Of the ten remaining kinds, two of them (the seventh and the thirteenth) are gradual changes, and must be taken up in the discussion of motion. However, the other eight kinds are instantaneous changes in which the potential existent is transformed into the actual existent instantaneously, without any temporal gap. The expression 'generation and corruption' is more or less used with regard to these changes. There is, however, some ambiguity about them which must be explained.

Therefore, this lesson is devoted to a discussion of these eight kinds of instantaneous change and applicability of the term 'generation and corruption' to them.

The Concepts of Generation and Corruption

The expression ‘kawn’ in Arabic has the meaning of being, and in philosophical terminology it is used to mean coming about and is approximately synonymous to ‘huduth’ (newness, coming into existence in time), and the expression ‘fasad’ (corruption) is used as its opposite, meaning the destruction of a phenomenon. In this way, the term ‘generation’ is more specific than ‘existence,’ because it is not used for immutable existents.

These two expressions are usually used together, and a clear example of it is the sixth of the mentioned kinds of change, that is, the destruction of a part of a substantial existent and appearance of another part. However, it can be generalized to some other types. If an instance can be found for the third kind, the expressions generation and corruption may be applied there. Likewise, the succession of opposites (which is the tenth kind of change) can be considered generation and corruption in accidents, although this terminology is usually associated with substances.

However, the fourth kind, that is, the addition of a substantial part without the destruction of another part, can be called ‘generation without corruption.’ And the reverse may be said of the fifth type, that is, the destruction of a substantial part without the appearance of a part to replace it, can be called ‘corruption without generation.’

Likewise, the eighth kind, the appearance of new accidents, can be considered ‘generation without corruption’ and the ninth kind, the destruction of accidents, can be considered ‘corruption without generation.’

The attachment of the soul to the body can also be considered a kind of generation, in view of the fact that the attribute of life thereby appears in the body. The reverse, dying, can be considered a kind of corruption, in view of the fact that the life of the body is destroyed, though not in the sense that the spirit is destroyed, for the spirit is indestructible.

Whether or not generation without corruption can be imagined in types four and fourteen, and corruption without generation in types five and fifteen, hinges on whether the presence of two forms in a single matter is considered permissible and on whether it is held that the prior form remains when a new substantial form appears, and in the case of the destruction of a higher form, whether the lower form existed together with the higher form and continues.

If we hold that two forms cannot be present in a single thing, then we will be compelled to hold, in types four and fourteen, that the earlier form is destroyed, and in types five and fifteen that a new form is freshly brought about. In this case these types will also be considered types of generation and corruption, not as cases of mere generation and mere corruption.

Therefore, the problem which must be investigated is whether the presence of two forms in a single thing

is permitted so that the assumption of the occurrence of two actual substantial forms in a potential existent and the continuation of one of them in an actual existent is allowed in cases five and fifteen, and the presence of two substantial forms in an actual existent and the persistence of the earlier form in types four and fourteen may be correct.

The Presence of Two Forms in a Single Matter

In types four and fourteen of the assumed types of change, the whole potential existent remains in the actual existent, and another substance is added as a new part to it, and a kind of union between them obtains, with this difference that in type four the form is incarnated in the matter, and the matter is the locus of this form. But in type fourteen, the soul is attached to the body, and the body is not considered its locus.

Now the question arises as to whether the form of the earlier existent vanishes and is corrupted and in place of it a more perfect form is brought about which possesses the perfections of the previous form, or in the new circumstances there really exist two forms, one of which is above the other vertically, not that the earlier form is destroyed.

For example, when a vegetable form comes into existence in a collection of elements, do these elements remain in the vegetable with their own actualities? Can it be said that in this plant oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, etc., actually exist, and that the vegetable form has become unified with the collection of them? Or should one say that the only form which exists in it is the vegetable form, and the mentioned elements exist only potentially?

Can it be said that when an animal soul attaches to specific materials, they preserve their specific existences and that they have actual existence within the animal existence, or should it be said that what has actuality is the form (soul) of the animal and that its body exists potentially? Do the materials which compose the human body and each of its millions of living cells have a specific form and actuality, and does the human soul attach to them as a higher form, or is that which is actual in a living human only his spirit, and does his body only exist potentially?

Likewise, in the case of the fifth and fifteenth types in which a part of the previous existent is destroyed or is separated from it, is it the case that from the beginning there were two substantial actualities and that later one of them leaves while the other remains with its previous actuality, or is it the case that at the beginning there exists a complete form, and with its detachment a less perfect form appears?

For example, when a plant withers and turns to dust, does the form of dust actually exist in the form of the plant and remain with that same actuality, or in the earlier circumstances was there only a complete vegetable form and with its passing does the form of dust newly appear?

Regarding the case of the detachment of the animal or human spirit from the animal or human body, do

the materials actually exist previously, and after separation of the spirit do they remain with the same previous actuality, or in the previous circumstances is actuality restricted to the spirit and after its detachment new forms freshly appear?

Therefore, that which these discussions pivot upon regarding these types of change is whether the presence of two forms in a single existent is allowed or not. That is, if the presence of two forms in the later existent is allowed, types four and fourteen are considered to be a kind of generation without corruption, and if the presence of two forms in the earlier existent is allowed, then types five and fifteen will be considered cases of corruption without generation. However, if the presence of two forms is impossible, all of these types will be cases of generation and corruption.

Some philosophers do not allow the presence of two forms in a single thing and have reasoned that the form is the very actuality and thingness of a thing, and that the numerical identity of the form implies the numerical identity of the thing, while their unity is assumed.

This reasoning is unsatisfactory, for, firstly, the unity of a composite existent, as was indicated in Lesson Twenty-Nine, is an accidental unity because of the unity of the higher form, and, in fact, the composite existent is the existents which are somehow united with each other, not that they are really a single existent.

Secondly, the problem can be posed as follows: Is the presence of two forms in a single matter permissible or not, as noted in the title of the discussion. It is obvious that the real issues here cannot be resolved on the basis of terminology and language.

In any case, the question is whether the composing materials of vegetables, animals, and humans have an actual form other than vegetable form, and animal and human souls, or do the earlier materials lose their own forms and actualities when the vegetable form comes into existence in the previous materials, or the animal or human soul attaches to a body, and in technical terms, are their forms corrupted and do new forms come about for the materials after the death of a plant, animal or man, and its transformation into elemental materials?

It seems that there should not be any doubt that the earlier forms remain, and that the new forms come about vertically, and are somehow unified with them, and then after corruption or detachment the earlier actualities remain and no other new form appears for them.

This is confirmed by the fact that many elemental particles and organic and mineral materials are separately visible by optical devices, and billions of living existents, including white and red blood cells can be observed in man's body, and they can be removed from the body and preserved under certain conditions, and hence, not only minerals and organic materials exist with their own actualities and specific forms within the existence of the vegetable, animal or human, but there also actually exist innumerable vegetable and animal existents within a higher animal or man. The animal and human spirit occurs as higher forms at a higher vertical level.

Is it acceptable to say that the bodies of man and animals have no actual existence apart from the existence of the spirit while the spirit is attached to the body and that when the animal or man dies and the spirit is separated from its body, the body obtains an actual existence and a new form appears in it?!

Therefore, there should be no doubt about the possibility of coexistence of two or more vertical forms in a single matter, for, indeed, this occurs frequently. That which is not possible is the coexistence of two contrary forms in a single matter which are in a horizontal position with respect to one another.

Here the question will be raised as to how one can distinguish vertical from horizontal forms.
The answer is that vertical and horizontal forms can only be distinguished by means of experience; that is, any form which experience proves to be incapable of coexisting with another form is horizontal, and any form which is capable of coexisting with another will be vertical.

Some examples of horizontal forms which are contrary to each other are the forms of water and steam and the forms of the various elements. However, the forms of the elements can coexist with vegetable, animal or human forms, and therefore they are considered to be vertical forms. Likewise, the lower forms of life, such as cells and corpuscles, can coexist with higher forms, such as the forms of higher animals and humans. For this reason, the forms of higher animals and of man are in a vertical relation to other forms.

Given this difference between forms, they can be divided into two groups: those forms which are successive, contrary to one another, and horizontal, and those which are superimposed or vertical. It is clear that this is a relative and relational division, and therefore it is possible for a form to be successive in relation to a certain form, but to be considered superimposing relative to another.

The Relation of Generation and Corruption to Motion

It is clear that generation and corruption is specific to instantaneous changes and motion is a feature of gradual changes. Therefore, in this respect one cannot include both of them in a single kind of change.

However, the absence of coexistence between generation and corruption and motion does not mean that there is no room for generation and corruption anywhere that motion exists. Rather it is possible for a moving thing to be characterized by generation or corruption from another angle.

To explain: it is possible for an existent to possess motion which ends in a single instant and at that very moment for another motion to appear in it. For example, the motion of an airplane which moves by the power of an engine is the effect of that power, and so, with the shutting down of that engine, the motion produced by it sooner or later comes to an end, and when a second engine starts working, another power is produced which causes a new motion for the plane.

Now, if it is supposed that the second motion begins the very moment that the first motion ends, although the motion of the plane is not interrupted there will actually be two motions, one of which is the

effect of the power of the first engine and another which is the effect of the power of the second. Here, in addition to gradual change there is also an instantaneous change, which is the ending of the first motion and its transformation into the second motion. This change can be called generation and corruption.

Likewise, when two successive forms appear in a matter and one of them is corrupted and the other takes its place, the substantial motion of the earlier form ends, and at that very moment the substantial motion of the later form begins. This transformation of forms and succession of substantial motions also should be considered a kind of generation and corruption, for it is accomplished in one instant and without any temporal gap.

Therefore, the assumption of the continuation of motion in a single existent is compatible with the occurrence of generation and corruption in it, because it is in fact possible for two alternating motions to have occurred in it which superficially are considered to be a single motion.

The only case in which generation and corruption is incompatible with motion is under the assumption of a single real motion. If the material world possessed a single unitary existence and it were supposed that it had a single substantial motion, then there would be no room for generation or corruption. However, this assumption is not correct, as will be explained in the appropriate place.

Lesson 55: Motion

The Concept of Motion

During the previous discussions the concept of motion became clear, and a simple definition of it was obtained: gradual change.

Other definitions of motion have been given, some of which were mentioned in the course of the preceding discussions, including ‘the gradual emergence of a thing from potentiality to actuality,’ and another definition ascribed to Aristotle, that is, ‘the first perfection of a potential existent qua potential,’ which was mentioned in Lesson Forty and which means that an existent which possesses the potentiality and capacity for a perfection but lacks it at present, will advance toward it under certain conditions, and this advancing is preparatory to the achievement of the sought perfection.

And the phrase ‘qua potential’ is added in order to exclude the specific form of the moving existent, because every potential existent has a specific form anyway, which may be considered its first perfection, but this first perfection is with respect to its actuality rather than its potentiality, and is irrelevant to motion. The perfection of motion for a body pertains to its potentiality, and its being ‘first’ pertains to its priority for attaining its end.

However, the first definition is to be preferred because it is more concise and conceptually clear, although none of them may be considered what in logical terminology is called a 'complete definition' (hadd-e tamm), because a complete definition is specific to whatnesses, which possess a genus and difference, while the concept of motion is a secondary philosophical intelligible abstracted from the manner of the moving existent, and in the external world there is no substance nor accident called motion; rather motion is the being gradual of the existence of a substance or accident and its flowing through the extension of time.

Even according to Shaykh al-Ishraq, who considered motion to be of the category of accidents, a complete definition cannot be given for it, because its category is a highest genus and does not possess genus and difference.

Another point we should mention is that instantaneous changes are abstracted from two existences, or at the least from the existence and nonexistence of a single thing, while motion is abstracted from a single existent and its extension through time. Numerical difference between something which changes and that into which it changes pertains only to its potential parts which continually become existent and nonexistent, although none of them has actual existence.

In other words, motion is not a collection of existents which come into existence one after the other, rather it is abstracted from the extension of a single existent and it is infinitely divisible, although the division of it in the external world involves the appearance of rest and the destruction of its unity.

The Existence of Motion

In Lesson Fifty-One it was mentioned that a group of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Parmenides and Zeno of Elea denied that there was gradual change or motion. This position seems strange at first, and the question immediately arises in the mind of the reader or hearer as to whether they did not observe all these various motions?!

Did they not themselves move around?! But by examining their words more carefully it becomes clear that the matter is not quite so simple. Even the positions of some of those who believe in motion and stubbornly defend it (such as some Marxists) originate with the Eleatics!

The secret of the matter is that they considered the changes called motion to be a collection of successive instantaneous changes. For example, the motion of a body from one point to another was considered to be the successive resting of the body at the points between the two assumed points. In other words, they did not accept motion as something gradual and continuous, but rather as a collection of successive rests. Therefore, if someone else holds that motion has actual parts, in reality he has joined the ranks of those who deny motion.

The truth is that the existence of motion as a single gradual thing is undeniable. Even some instances of

it, such as the gradual changes of psychic qualities, can be perceived by infallible presentational knowledge. The source of the error of the Eleatics are doubts that run counter to consciousness and self- evidence, and no uncertainty remains once these doubts are dispelled.

Problems Raised by those who deny the existence of motion and their solution

Those who have denied the existence of motion in the external world and who have considered it to be a mental concept which refers to a succession of rests have resorted to dubious notions the most important of which are the following two:

1. If motion exists as a single continuous thing in the external world, it must be considered as having parts, and since each of its parts possesses extension, each of these in turn will be divisible into other parts, and this division will continue infinitely. This implies that finite motion must be infinite.

Aristotle responded to this difficulty by claiming that motion does not have actual parts which could be finite or infinite, but rather that it can be divided into two parts, for example, in which case there will be two motions, not a single motion. Likewise, each part may be divided into two or more parts, and with each division performed in the external world a number of actual existents will come about.

These divisions may be continued without end, and hence the supposed motion itself will be finite, although its potential parts will be infinite. No contradiction exists between these two propositions, because one of the conditions for a contradiction is the unity of the actual and the potential which does not obtain in this case, for being finite is the attribute of the motion as a whole, while being infinite is the attribute of its potential parts.

But it is better to ask one who reasons in this way what do you mean by finite motion being infinite? If what is meant by being infinite is the number of its parts, this number does not actually exist in any motion, and the appearance of any number, whether finite or infinite, in motion is due to its objective division, in which case a single motion will not exist.

Likewise, everything which is divisible into two halves is presently a unit, but whenever it is divided, it becomes two units, but this divisibility does not imply that it is both one and two!

If what is meant is that the infinite divisibility of motion implies that the continuous amount and quantity (rather than number) is finite from one side and infinite from another, because every part of its infinite parts will have a quantity, and the collection of these amounts will be infinite, the answer to this is that even if every extension is divisible into an infinite number of parts, the amount of any extension will still be a fraction of the amount of the whole. Hence, the sum of the quantities of the infinite fractions of motion will be the finite amount of the motion itself: (1/¥ ´ ¥=1).

It must be mentioned that this problem is not specific to motion, but covers all extensions, such as line and time. For this reason, those who raise these doubts consider every limited line to be composed of a

limited number of extensionless points, and every limited portion of time to be composed of a determinate number of instants.

They believe that although the points are not extended, a collection of several points could bring a line into existence: though an instant has no length or extension, a set of several of them brings about a portion of time; likewise, a collection of rests brings about motion; in reality, that which has objective existence are points, instants and rests. Line, time and motion are concepts abstracted from their collections.

In other words, they believe in 'indivisible parts' (juz' la yatajazza), that is, every extension is capable of being divided into limited parts, and they believe that the last division leads to parts which are no longer divisible.

This is a problem about which philosophers have spoken much, and they have given numerous reasons for the invalidity of the notion of 'indivisible parts,' but this is not the place to review them.

2. The other problem is that when a body moves from point A towards point C, for example, at the first instant it is at point A, and at the third instant it is at point C, so, there is no other alternative but that at the second instant it must pass some point B which is between the other two, otherwise there could be no motion.

Now, if it is assumed that the above-mentioned body is at point B at the second instant, this would imply that its motion is a collection of three rests, for rest is nothing but the residence of a body in a place, and if it did not reside there this would imply that there was no motion, for motion without passing the second point is impossible. Therefore, motion implies a contradiction (being and not being at an intermediate point).

The answer is that in this example three corresponding extensions are assumed: time, space and motion. If we consider three extended parts for each of them, it can be said that in the first part of time, the moving body has been in the first part of the space and that the first part of its motion corresponds to them, and likewise for the second and third parts. However, the occurrence of every part of the motion in the corresponding parts of time and space does not mean that the body is ever at rest.

However, if we take points and moments in their real meaning, as lacking extension, it would have to be said that actual instants and points do not exist in time and space, and the assumption of an actual point in a line means its division into two line segments, such that the said point is the end of one segment and the beginning of another. It is the same for the assumption of an instant in time and the assumption of a rest in motion. What it means for a body to be at a certain instant at a point in space is that if the extensions of time, space and motion were cut, their points of division would correspond to each other.

This does not imply the existence of rest in the midst of motion, just as it does not imply the existence of points in a line or the existence of instants in time. In reality, the source of this problem is that, on the

one hand, being is considered to be equivalent to fixation, rest and residence, while on the other hand, time is assumed to be composed of instants and line composed of points.

They attempted to present the extension of motion as a composition of atoms of rest by means of a comparison to the extensions of time and space, while being includes both fixed and flowing beings. Moments and points are ends of extensions of time and line, and are not considered to be parts of them. Likewise, rest appears as the stopping of motion, not as something that exists in the midst of a single motion so as to be considered a part of it.

Lesson 56: Properties of Motion

The Constituent Factors of Motion

Noting that which has already been discussed regarding motion, it becomes clear that the occurrence of motion hinges on three things which may be called the constituents of motion:

1. The unity of the source of abstraction of motion. Contrary to other types of change, motion is abstracted from a single existent. Hence, every motion is a single entity in which no actual parts are to be found.

2. The fluidity and extension of motion in the expanse of time. Since that which is gradual does not occur without a correspondence to time, motion is not abstracted from instantaneous things and fixed existents, which are outside the realm of time, and it is not attributed to them.

3. Infinite divisibility. Just as every extension is infinitely divisible, so is motion. Each potential part of motion is the changing predecessor (mutaghayyir) in relation to the potential part which follows it, and the part which follows, with respect to the part which precedes it, is its changed successor (mutaghayyirun ilayh).

The Features of Motion

In addition to the three things mentioned above, which are grasped through meditation on the essence of motion, and which are necessary for all motions, there are other things which may be called the features of motion. Noting the differences among them, specific kinds of motion may be considered, the most important of which are the following:

1. **The channel of motion**. It is possible for an existent to have numerous aspects of capacity for change. For example, it is possible for an apple to fall from a tree with a spatial or translative motion,

and likewise it is possible for it to rotate or to gradually change color. However, each of these motions has its own specific 'channel' (bastar) which distinguishes it from other motions.

For example, the channel for the motion of the apple toward the ground is space, and this motion is spatial or one of displacement, or motion in the category of where ('ayn). The channel for the gradual change in its hue is color, and this is considered to be a change in the category of quality. The channel for its rotation is position, and it is taken to be a change in the category of position.

2. **The course of motion**. It is possible for something to move in various ways through a single channel. For example, the spatial movement or displacement of a star is possible in either a circular or an elliptical shape, or the motion of a ball from one point to another may be in a straight or a curved line. In this way another concept may be obtained which is more specific than the previous one, and this may be called the course (madar; literally, orbit, here used in the sense of the course of motion) of motion.

However, it must be noted that the expression madar has a broader meaning here than its literal meaning, the place of circling, just as the expression 'curve' has a broader meaning in mathematics than in ordinary usage, and it is possible for the curve which shows the course of a given change to be a straight line.

3. **The direction of motion**. It is also possible for motion in a single course to take place in various ways. For example, the motion of a top rotating on its axis may be from left to right or from right to left. Therefore, another feature must be considered for motion, and this is called the direction of motion.

4. **The speed of motion**. Speed is a concept which is obtained from the relation between the time and displacement of motion. For example, it is possible for a body to travel a certain distance in one minute or in two minutes. The distinguishing aspect between these two motions is speed.

5. **Acceleration**. It is possible for the speed of motion to gradually increase or decrease, as it is possible for the speed to remain constant. In the first case, the motion is becoming faster, or possesses a positive acceleration. In the second case it is becoming slower or possesses a negative acceleration, while in the third case it is said to be constant, or without acceleration, or as possessing zero acceleration.

6. **The agent of motion**. Among the things which differentiate types of motion is difference in the type of agent of motion. For example, there is a difference in kind between motions which have voluntary agents and those with natural agents, although there may be no difference externally.

Likewise, multiple individual agents cause multiple individual motions, just as the multiple forces which successively come about by the two engines of an airplane causes the multiplicity of its motions, even if the two above mentioned motions are contiguous and without any temporal gap, and from a superficial point of view there seems to be but a single motion.

The Requirements of Motion

Philosophers have considered six things to be requirements of motion: origin (mabda'), end (muntaha), time, distance, subject (mutaharrak) and agent (muharrik).

1 & 2. **Origin and end**. Some of the definitions of motion suffice to warrant the requirement of an origin and end for every motion. For example, 'the gradual emergence of actuality from potentiality' implies that at the beginning a potentiality should exist and at the end of the motion and actuality. Hence, potentiality and actuality may be considered the origin and end of motion.

It appears that motion does not essentially require a relation to an origin or end, and hence, the assumption of infinite motion without beginning or end is not an irrational one. Accordingly, some ancient philosophers considered the motions of the celestial spheres to be without beginning or end in time, and so they had to take quite some pains to associate some origin and end with them.

It may be said that origin or end are specific to limited motions, and that origin or end are implied by their limits, not implied by the motion itself, as every limited extension has an origin or end. Perhaps the source of the plausibility of considering motion to have an origin or end is that a means is thereby sought to determine the direction of motion.

Anyway, origin or end cannot be considered requirements of all motions. It is necessary to mention that those who consider motion to require an origin or end do not take them to be within the motion itself, because every part of motion is extended, and no matter how small a part is imagined, it will be divisible, and again it will have to have a beginning part. If a part of motion is called the origin or end of motion, this will be a relative attribution to the motion itself.

Taking potentiality and actuality as the origin and end of motion involves a certain laxity, for the terms origin and end are abstracted from the limits of motion, like point for line and moment for time, and they are considered to have an aspect of non-being. This is contrary to potentiality and actuality (especially the latter) which cannot be considered cases in which there are aspects of non- being.

Furthermore, the requirement of potentiality and actuality has not been established for motion, and it may be said that in order to abstract the concept of motion it is not necessary to take into account anything more than the gradual existence of a substance or accident. Therefore, another distinctive aspect of the first definition of motion (gradual change) is established.

3. **Time**. It was previously indicated that it is impossible for a thing to be gradual without a correspondence to time. For this reason, the corresponding extension in time was considered to be one of the fundamentals of motion. Since time and motion are analytic accidents of fluid existence, they may be considered to be two sides of the same coin.

4. **Distance**. By the 'distance' of motion philosophers mean a category to which the motion is related,

such as the relation of rotation to the category of position, and the relation of translative motion to the category of space.

Distance is like a canal through which a moving thing flows. If it is assumed that the extension of motion is cut, and it comes to rest, then it may be said that the mentioned body is in the canal.

Therefore, distance corresponds to the channel of motion. However, a subtle distinction may be drawn between distance and the channel of motion, namely, that the channel of motion is also applied to the specific whatness, such that every supposed part of motion can be considered to be an individual of that species. However, distance is commonly used as a term for the highest genus or category, and it is like an extended canal which embraces partial canals.

To explain further, motion as we know it is obtained from the extension of the existence of a substance or accident through the expanse of time, and it is possible that the existent which is the source of the abstraction of motion is perfected through the process of motion, such that from a part of it a specific whatness is abstracted, and from another part, another whatness.

For example, if it is assumed that the color of an apple gradually changes from green to red, from a part of this motion the accidental whatness of green will be abstracted, while from another part the accidental whatness of red is abstracted, both of which are considered kinds of color. Color in turn is considered a sensory quality, and sensory quality belongs to the category of 'quality.' The distance of this motion is the very category of quality. But the channel of the motion is also applied in the case of the transformation of an individual of one specific quality to another individual.

For example, the motion of a body from one place to another does not require the occurrence of kinds within the category of place, rather, one individual is constantly transformed into another individual, regardless of the laxity in the use of 'individual' for the potential parts of motion, and likewise the laxity in the use of 'category' for the abstracted concept of place.

In any case, observing that changes from one kind to another in the process of motion are not permissible, philosophers considered categories to be channels of a general sort for motion, for motion never violates the limits of the categories, and they called the channels 'distance.'

It should not be left unsaid that some philosophers considered specific difference between potential parts of motion to be not only permissible but necessary. However, it seems that specific difference can only be taken to obtain at the beginning or end of motion, because the abstraction of several whatnesses from the potential parts of motion implies the ability to consider a definite boundary for each of them.

This indicates that the given motion is really a composite of several motions, however much it may seem superficially to be a single motion. For example, although the transformation of the color of an apple from green to yellow and from yellow to red seems to be a single process, if these colors and perhaps other colors which are intermediaries between them were different in kind, certain cut-off points in the motion

would be abstracted, and the assumption of numerous cut-off points is like the assumption of the appearance of points in a line and implies numerous cuts even if no temporal separation between the cut-off points is assumed.

5. **Subject**: Another thing that philosophers have considered to be necessary for motion is the subject of motion or the object moved (mutaharrik). However, it must be noted that the expression 'subject' (mawdhu') is employed in the intellectual sciences in various senses, the most well known of which are indicated by the logical term, which is usually contrasted with 'predicate,' and the philosophical term, which is used in the case of substance insofar as it is the locus of accidents.

The first term is a secondary logical intelligible, and is applied to the first part of every predicative proposition, and even the concept of 'contradiction' in the proposition 'contradictions are impossible' is the subject of the proposition. It is clear that 'subject' in this sense is not relevant to the present discussion.

The second term is specific to the subjects of accidents, and if motion is also an objective accident, as was imagined by Shaykh Ishraq, it will be in need of a subject. However, we have come to know that motion is not a kind of objective accident, but a kind of analytic accident of flowing existence.

Hence, the establishment of a subject for all motions will only be correct in a third sense, which includes the source of the abstraction of analytical accidents. According to a famous expression in philosophy, a subject is only needed in the case of accidental motion in the respect in which it is an accident and not in the respect in which it possesses motion.

6. **The Agent or Mover**: The sixth thing which philosophers have considered to be necessary for motion is a mover or agent of motion. However, it must be borne in mind that the agent, meaning the generative cause ('illat-e hasti bakhsh, literally, 'existence granting cause') is not specific to motion. Every existent which is an effect needs a generative cause.

Basically, motion has no entified specific referent beyond the existence of the substance or accident abstracted from it, and it is the existence of the substance or accident which requires a generative cause. The concept of motion is abstracted from the manner of its existence, and 'composite making' (ja'l ta'lifi) does not apply to it.

In other words, the creation of a flowing substance or accident is the very creation of substantial or accidental motion. However, a natural agent, who is not a producer or creator, and is considered in another sense to be a preparatory cause, is specific to material phenomena all of which possess a kind of change, alteration or motion. But such an agent can only be assumed in the case of accidental motions, and in the appropriate place it will be explained that substantial motion does not need this sort of agent.

Lesson 57: Divisions of Motion

Introduction

We have learned that the constituents of motion exist in all motions and are invariable, and there is no difference on the basis of which different types of motion may be conceived. However, the characteristics and implications of motion are more or less different, and on the basis of these various kinds of motion can be differentiated.

For example, differences in the course of transfer are completely sensible and the different forms for it which may be imagined cause differences in the related motions. But, on the one hand, the differences in courses are not limited to a certain number of types, and on the other hand, no specific philosophical conclusions are to be obtained on the basis of such differences. Hence, a categorization of motions on the basis of differences in their courses will not be of much benefit.

Likewise, the directions of motion, even if they are generally divided into six main well known directions [will not provide for a useful categorization]. First, this division is conventional; second, the division of motion on the basis of these differences yields no philosophical fruit. Also the speeds of motion are innumerable, but these differences are inconsequential for philosophical analysis.

The division of motion on the basis of differences among its agents is really subordinate to the types of agents which have been indicated in Lesson Thirty- Eight. In general, motions may be divided into two kinds, natural and voluntary, for every intentional agent (fa'il bil-qasd), providential agent (fa'il bil-'inayah), agent by agreement (fa'il bil-ridha) and agent by self-disclosure (fa'il bil-tajalli) is a voluntary agent.

Compelled agents (fa'il bil-jabr) and subordinate agents (fa'il bil- taskhir) are also considered to be particular states of voluntary agents, just as the constrained agent (fa'il qasri) is considered to be a specific state of the natural agent.

Among all the properties of motion, the most important thing about which the philosophical discussions of the categories of motion turn are the channel and the distance of motion. However, prior to the presentation of these discussions, it would be worthwhile to have a short discussion of a division of motion on the basis of differences in acceleration and at the same time to review the problem of the evolutionary nature of motion and its relation to acceleration.

Divisions of Motion on the Basis of Acceleration

Consider an automobile the needle of whose speedometer gradually increases from zero to one hundred

kilometers per hour. It goes up, then stays there for a while, and then gradually returns to zero. This automobile is transferred during the period of its motion from point A to point B, and this motion is translative and occurs in the channel of space. However, in this process, two other gradual changes are observed.

One is the change of the speed from zero to one hundred kph, and the other is the change from one hundred to zero. From a philosophical point of view, this change is also to be included in the definition of motion. It may be considered a kind of motion in quality, since acceleration and deceleration are two qualities specific to motion which are also accidents of the quantities of the speeds.

The same can be said for other types of changes or motions, so that one motion in quality may be attributed to another motion in quality from a different point of view. For example, suppose that a colorless body gradually becomes black and retains that state of blackness for a while, then its color gradually fades and it becomes colorless again.

Undoubtedly, a change in the color of a body is a motion in the category of quality. It is possible that the degree of blackening or fading is not uniform through all parts of time. For example, the speed of blackening might gradually increase and then decrease in the same manner.

This change in speed is different from the change itself in color, and for this reason it may be considered a motion which rides upon the other motion. Likewise, one may consider a constant motion to lack this sort of change, and its speed will be fixed.

Therefore, from the perspective of constancy or change in speed, motion can be divided into three kinds:

1. Constant motion without acceleration and a fixed speed.

2. Motion with increasing speed or positive acceleration.

3. Motion with decreasing speed or negative acceleration.

The existence of motion with increasing speed and of motion with decreasing speed and likewise of motion with constant speed are observed by the senses and are undeniable. One can even find instances of them by means of presentational knowledge such as changes in subjective qualities and states which gradually increase and decrease in speed or are constant. Without a doubt, one may consider the decrease in the speed of a motion as a kind of decline, gradual weakness and imperfection in the motion.

In this way a kind of weakening and declining motion is established. It is at this point that we confront the question of whether the existence of slowing motion conflicts with some of the definitions of motion, such as, ‘the gradual emergence of a thing from potentiality to actuality’ or ‘the first perfection of a potential existent insofar as it is potential.’

In order to answer this question, two aspects of the discussion must be distinguished, one is the perfection of the motion and the other is the perfection of the moving existent. It is possible that the moving object obtains new perfections through the course of its motion, while there are differences in the speed of these attainments. That is, in some times the speed of perfection may increase while at other times it decreases and at yet a third time this speed may be constant.

The constancy or even the decrease in the speed of attaining perfection in no way detracts from the fact that the moving object is becoming perfected. For example, a body whose rate of blackening decreases will still be ever blacker from one moment to the next, although the change in color will occur more slowly. Hence, there is no contradiction between the assumption that motion leads to the greater perfection of the moving existent and the assumption of a negative acceleration for the speed of perfection.

If someone were to claim that every motion becomes more perfect insofar as it is motion, this claim will not be compatible with the acceptance of constant motion and motion without acceleration, and it is clear that such a claim will be contrary to introspection and self-evidence. Recourse to some definitions of motion will not enable one to prove such a claim.

Furthermore, the mentioned definitions do not prove such a claim because at most what can be concluded from them is the fact that the moving existent under the influence of motion obtains new perfection and actuality, and as was indicated, the perfection of a moving thing does not conflict with the decrease of the speed of its motion.

The next question we shall take up is that of whether every motion leads to the perfection of the moving thing or not.

The Evolution of the Moved due to Motion

We have learned that the perfecting of motion, in the sense of acceleration and increasing intensity, is not universal. None of the definitions of motion indicate this. However, in the sense of the perfection of the moved under the influence of motion, it is possible to infer from the two mentioned definitions that since the moved achieves a new actuality and perfection by means of motion, it is necessary that every motion will be an intensification and lead to the perfection of the moved.

One who reasons in this way must confront a great problem: many things gradually weaken, wilt and perish. Their gradual change and motion not only fail to increase their perfections but constantly decrease their perfections, and bring them close to death and destruction. Plants and animals, after passing through the periods of growth and flourishing, enter the stage of old age and decrepitude, and their withering and declining motion begins.

In order to escape this difficulty they have sought to find an alternative in the claim that these kinds of

declining and decaying motions are accompanied by the motions of other existents which are growing. For example, while an apple rots due to affliction by a worm, the worm grows in it, and the real motion is the perfecting motion of the worm, which brings about the decrease in perfection of the apple, and its wilting and rotting are its accidental motions.

Not only is there no way to prove that in all cases the declining motion of a moving thing is accompanied by the intensifying motion of another moving thing, but also one cannot ignore the gradual declining change of an existent and dismiss it as 'accidental.' Finally, this question remains, what is the philosophical significance of this gradual declining process in the wilting existent?

Reliance on the mentioned definitions in order to deny non-perfecting motions cannot explain their undeniable existence. Assuming that the purport of the definitions is not compatible with declining motion, one must raise doubts about the correctness and universality of the definitions, instead of relying on the authority of the definitions to justify something which is unacceptable. At the same time, however, it is possible to interpret these definitions in such a way that they do not imply a denial of non-perfecting motions.

As was explained in Lesson Fifty-Two, actual and potential are two concepts which are abstracted by comparing the priority of one existent to another and the inclusion in the second existent of the whole or part of the first existent. This by no means implies that the second whole is more perfect than the first.

Likewise, considering the motion to be a preparatory perfection for the attainment of a major perfection does not imply the perseverance of all of the previous perfections in the present existent, for it is possible that a requirement for motion and the attainment of a perfection whose conclusion is being considered is that the moving object must lose some of its other perfections. The perfection which is obtained as a result of motion may be equivalent to or even less than the lost perfection.

Therefore, the correspondence of Aristotle's definition to various types of motions does not imply that the perfection which is obtained through motion is ontologically superior to the perfection lost by the moving object. It cannot be concluded that the moving existent necessarily becomes more perfect, comparing its present station with its previous condition.

It is not basically necessary to depend on the concepts of actuality and potentiality and the concept of perfection in the definition of motion, for these concepts, which themselves are in need of explanation and interpretation, cannot remove any ambiguity from the concept of motion.

Is it really acceptable to say that everything which moves from one place to another thereby becomes more perfect and attains new perfections superior to those it had possessed? Can it really be proved that the wilting and declining processes of every vegetable and animal are the results of the perfection of another existent? Perhaps it will be asked, if motion does not bring about the perfection of the moved, then why does the moved undertake the motion? What motivation could it have?

The answer is that, first, not every motion arises from the consciousness and motivation of the moved, as was mentioned regarding natural and constrained motions. Second, it is possible for a conscious existent to perform a motion in order to attain a real or imaginary pleasure, but out of negligence for the natural consequences or due to the intensity of the desire for the mentioned pleasure, this motion leads to the loss of more valuable perfections. Anyway, the irrationality and imprudence of such a motion does not imply that it is impossible.

It is possible to say that if the resultant of the motions of the world is not positive and that the result of the collection of all their motions is not the obtaining of more perfection for existents in this world, then the creation of such a world would be vain and useless.

The answer is that on the basis of divine wisdom we can prove that the creation of the world is not vain and useless and its results are wise. However, the positive character of the resultant of the motions does not imply that every motion necessarily is perfecting and causes more perfection for the moved itself.

It may be concluded that there is no reason to hold that every moving thing under the influence of motion achieves a perfection superior to its previous perfection, regarding its ontological level. Innumerable experiences show that not only is there constant motion, but also declining and weakening motion exist, in the sense that the moved gradually loses its present perfections or possesses perfections which are not superior to those it has lost.

If some definitions of motion are not compatible with such motions, they must be considered to lack universality. The perfecting character of every motion can be accepted only in the sense that the existence of the moving thing attains to something existing, which it previously lacked, although it previously may have possessed something similar or more perfect, as was mentioned regarding the relation between the potential and the actual.

Lesson 58: Motion in Accidents

Introduction

The motion which is familiar to ordinary people is motion in space and position, such as the motions of the earth's revolution about the sun and its rotation about its axis. However, philosophers have expanded the concept of motion to include any kind of gradual change, and they have established two other kinds of motion: one is qualitative motion, such as the gradual change of states and qualities of the soul, and the changes in color and shape of bodies.

The other is quantitative motion, such as the gradual growth of a tree and the increase in its height. As a

result, motion has been divided into four groups in accordance with the related category. All of these are related to accidental categories: motion in space, motion in position, qualitative motion and quantitative motion.

The ancient philosophers did not allow motion in substance. There are only a few ancient Greek philosophers from whom some claims have been reported which are comparable to substantial motion. Among the Islamic philosophers, Sadr al-Muta'allihin developed and gave numerous reasons in support of the existence of substantial motion. From this time, the problem of substantial motion became famous among Islamic philosophers. Here, we shall first review the four types of accidental motion, and then we will discuss substantial motion independently.

Spatial Motion

As was indicated, the most sensible type of motion is spatial motion, whose channel is the space of bodies. Philosophers have introduced the category of where ('ayn) as pertaining to its distance. However, as was previously mentioned, the category of where, like the other relative categories, is not a whatness of species or genus. Instead, it is a relational and relative concept,
which is abstracted from the relation between a thing and its location

Space is also an analytic accident of bodies which does not have a entified object. In reality, the location of every thing is a part of the volume of the whole material universe which is considered separately, though it does not possess a separate existence.

Anyway, motion in space is either intentional, as when a man transfers himself from one place to another of his own will, or non-intentional, like the spatial movements of non-living bodies. Non-intentional motion, in turn, is divided into natural and unnatural motion, for it is either required by the nature of the thing, or it is under the influence of a constraining force.

Intentional motion, which is based on the soul of the willing agent, is really a subordinative (taskhiri) action which would not occur without the intermediary of the soul. The souls of animals and men use a natural agent to move their bodies or other objects, so the direct and proximate agent of intentional motion is nature.

On the other hand, constrained motion, whether it derives from that which constrains (qasir), as asserted by us, or from that which is constrained (maqsur), as most philosophers have held, is ultimately produced by the nature of the body. Hence, every motion derives from nature, and for this reason, nature is introduced as the agent source (mabda' fa'ili) of the motion of bodies. In other words, every motion has a source of its tendency (mabda' mayli) which is either a property of the body's nature or appears by means of the influence of the nature of another thing.

The ancient philosophers presented views about the source of motion in moving bodies, some of which

were discussed in Lesson Thirty-Eight. However, their explanations were based on the assumptions of the then current natural sciences and do not correspond to contemporary scientific theories.

But, in general, it can be said that corporeal motion does not lie beyond these two alternatives: either it is required by the nature of the moving existent—and in this case the motion continues until it confronts an obstacle—or the essence of the moving existent does not require motion, but it occurs under the influence of a foreign factor. If this foreign factor itself does not require motion essentially, another factor will have to exist, until it culminates in a material factor that essentially requires motion.

This factor corresponds to the thing which in modern physics is called 'energy.' It is the transference of energy to bodies which causes their motion. But it must be noted that the validity of this correspondence depends on the validity of the related scientific theory. However, the existence of a natural factor that essentially requires motion is a philosophical theory to which the correctness or incorrectness of scientific theories makes no difference.

Motion in Position

Just about everything that has been said about spatial motion applies to motion in position as well. Basically, motion in position may be reduced to spatial motion because although in motion in position the place of the entire body does not change the parts of the moving thing gradually change location, so that, for example, the part which was to the right moves to the left, or the part which was above moves below.

The discussion of whether position is really a category is similar to that about the category of where (ʾayn). The division of motion in position into intentional and the non-intentional is similar to the corresponding division in spatial motion.

A notable point is that philosophers do not consider circular motion to be required by nature, and in this regard modern physics says that motion which is not in a straight line must be the resultant of several forces. The final judgment about this kind of problem is the responsibility of the empirical sciences.

Motion in Quality

The third category in which motion occurs is the category of quality. It may be further subdivided by attending to its kinds, such as motion in mental quality, motion in sensible quality, motion in qualities specific to quantity and motion in dispositional qualities (kayf istiʿdadi).
The most indubitable among the types of motion in quality, is motion in mental quality, for it is perceived by infallible presentational knowledge.

For example, everyone finds within themselves an affection or love for someone or something, and gradually this attraction becomes intense. Or one feels a dislike toward someone or something which

gradually changes into an intense loathing, or the opposite, a state of intense anger appears and gradually is mollified, or a state of intense joy appears and gradually vanishes. From a philosophical point of view, these gradual changes are considered motion.

Motions such as these may be considered to be like sensible qualities, such as color, but we know that the reality of color and the qualities of their intensity and weakness are still subjects of discussion among physicists. Therefore, the existence of this type of motion in quality is not as certain as the previous type.

The third type of motion in quality is motion in shape. If two ends of a string which are extended to form a straight are line gradually brought together in such a way that a curve is formed, then the plane surface and its straight line (if the line it possesses is actual) gradually becomes curved. However, if this transformation is really gradual, it will be subordinate to motion in the position of the string itself or to the spatial motion of its parts.

Another example of this kind of motion in quality may be found in the speeding up or slowing down of any motion, because it is a quality specific to the quantity of its speed, as was explained in the previous lesson.

The fourth kind of motion in quality is motion in dispositional qualities and their gradual intensification and weakening. However, in Lesson Forty-Eight it became clear that the concept of disposition is a kind of concept which is abstracted from the decrease and increase in the conditions for the occurrence of a phenomenon.

Therefore, if the occurrence of the conditions is really gradual, the motion in the disposition of quality can be considered a concept abstracted from several motions. If it is assumed that the occurrence of a phenomenon depends on only one condition, and that this condition really comes about gradually, then in this case, motion in dispositional quality can be considered a concept abstracted from the motion of the mentioned condition.

Motion in Quantity

Motion in the category of quantity for a moving body is assumed either in disjoint quantity and number, or in continuous quantities and amount. But in addition to the fact that number does not have real existence, it makes no sense to speak of numbers changing gradually, for change in number is obtained only by means of increase or decrease in units, and these increases and decreases occur instantaneously, although it may be based on gradually fulfilled prerequisites or spatial motion.

If motion in continuous quantity is supposed in a line, its changes depend on the changes in the surface [on which the line exists], and the changes in a surface in turn depend on the changes in volume, and until the volume of something increases or decreases the amount of its surface or lines will not increase or decrease.

An increase in volume will be obtained either as an effect of the attachment of another body or as an effect of the expansion and extension of its own parts. Likewise, a decrease in the volume of a body will occur either as an effect of the removal of a section from it, or as an effect of pressure on its existing parts.

Change which is obtained as a result of composition and decomposition, attachment and detachment, is usually instantaneous, although the prerequisites for it might be fulfilled gradually. However, a case of gradual composition and decomposition may be imagined, for example, such that two liquids each of which is assumed to possess a true individual unity are gradually poured into one another so that they are mixed and a third liquid with its own individual unity results.

Regarding the fact that every compound liquid is composed of uncountable molecules the proof of individual unity for each of the two assumed liquids and for the mixture of the two is exceedingly difficult. In reality, this kind of analysis and synthesis are sets of instantaneous connections and disconnections which appear following the spatial motion of the parts.

Decrease or increase in the volume of a body as a result of the expansion or compression of its parts is in fact another way of describing motion in space and position of its molecules and atoms. For example, when water boils and turns into steam its volume increases, but this increase in volume, according to that established by physicists, is nothing but the increase in the distance of the molecules of water. Likewise the transformation of steam into water and gas into liquid is nothing but the decrease in the distance of these molecules and atoms.

Therefore, the growth of plants and animals has been considered a clear instance of motion in quantity, and although it is obtained by addition of other bodies such as water and nutrients, it is assumed that each of them possesses a single specific form whose amount gradually increases.

It seems that the establishment of true motion in quantity is also difficult in these cases because undoubtedly vegetable growth is under the influence of the addition of foreign materials which are transferred into them by spatial motion, and the connections and disconnections of their parts take place instantaneously.

Likewise, when two bodies move toward each other, or one of them moves toward the other, although they gradually approach each other, their attachment takes place at a single instant and without any duration. After their new parts are put in their places, although their chemical and physiological actions and reactions take place gradually, there is no reason that the specific form of a tree or an animal also develop gradually to include the new part. It is possible that the change of the prior quantity to the new quantity occurs instantaneously, and is a kind of generation or corruption, not something gradual and a kind of motion in quantity.

It is to be concluded that demonstrating that there is motion in quantity is more difficult than demonstrating the other kinds of motion. It is possible that what is called motion in quantity is really a set

of spatial motions, instantaneous connections and disconnections, or instantaneous generation and corruption.

Lesson 59: Motion in Substance

Introduction

As was indicated, philosophers of the past, including Aristotelians and Illuminationists, considered motion to be specific to accidents. Not only did they fail to establish substantial motion, but they imagined it to be impossible. Also, among the ancient Greek philosophers none are to be found who explicitly discuss substantial motion or establish it. The only position which is comparable to substantial motion is that reported to have been held by Heraclitus (540–470 B.C.).

Other than those Islamic and non–Islamic philosophers and theologians who believed in constant renewing creation, none are found to whom a tendency toward substantial motion can be ascribed. However, contrary to the famous philosophers of the world, the one who explicitly established substantial motion and boldly insisted on it was the great Islamic philosopher, Sadr al–Muta'allihin Shirazi.

Here, we shall first present the objections raised by those who deny substantial motion and answer them, then we shall explain the theory of Sadr al– Muta'allihin and the arguments he has put forth to prove it.

Objections to Substantial Motion

The discussions of those who imagine substantial motion to be impossible turn on the notion that one of the prerequisites or rather one of the constituents, of every motion, is the existence of the moved, or in technical terms, the subject of motion.

When we say that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun, or that an apple turns from green to yellow and then to red, or that a sapling or a baby animal or human grows and develops, in each of these cases we have a fixed essence whose attributes and states gradually change.

However, if it is said that the essence itself is not fixed, and just as its attributes and accidents change, its substance also is transformed, then to what are we to relate this change? In other words, substantial motion will be a motion without a thing moved and an attribute without a thing to which attribution is made. This is not rational.

Answers to the Objections

The origin of this objection is a defect in the analysis of motion. As a result, some philosophers, such as al-Shaykh al-Ishraq, have consciously considered motion to belong to the category of extraneous accidents, while others have unconsciously considered it so. Hence, they considered it necessary for there to be a entified independent subject of motion and attribution which remains fixed through the process of motion, and to which motion and change are related as accidents and attributes.

However, as was previously made clear, motion is that very flowing of the existence of substances and accidents, not an accident alongside other accidents. In other words, the concept of motion is not a whatish concept, rather it is a secondary philosophical intelligible. To put it still differently, motion is an analytic accident of existence, not an extraneous accident of existents.

These sorts of concepts do not need a subject in the sense which has been established for accidents. The only thing that can be considered as the source of abstraction of motion is the flowing substantial or accidental existence itself, in the sense of a subject related to analytic accidents, that is, a subject whose objective existence is identical with an accident, and any distinction between them is impossible except in the realm of mental analysis.

Therefore, when we say, 'A substance has changed,' it is as if we were to say, 'the color of the apple (and not the apple itself) has changed.' It is clear that in the process of a transformation in color, there is no fixed color to which the transformation is attributed. Even an independent subject is related to accidental motions only because of its being an accident, not because it is motion.

Therefore, even if the accident pertaining to the motion were to remain unchanged, it would still need a subject, as the apple itself is needed whether its color is fixed or changing.

It is to be concluded that motion and immutability are two analytic attributions for flowing and immutable existence, and such attributions do not require entified subjects of attribution independent of the attribution itself.

In the same way as immutability is not an accident of an existent in external reality in such a way that it would lack immutability without that accident, likewise, the attribute of motion is not is not an extraneous accident of a particular existent so that without it, it should be characterized with immutability and lack of motion. In technical terms, analytic accidents do not require independent subjects; rather their existence is identical with the existence of their subjects.

It is worth noting the subtle point that according to the fundamentality of existence, motion must be related to existence as an analytic accident, and the relating of it to the whatness of a substance or accident is an accidental relation.

Arguments for the Existence of Substantial Motion

Sadr al-Muta'allihin offered three lines of argument to establish substantial motion.

1. The first argument for substantial motion has two premises. One is that accidental changes in a thing are the effects of the substantial nature of that thing. The second premise is that the natural cause of motion must be a moving thing. From this it is concluded that a substance which is the cause of motion in accidents must be a moving thing.

As for the first premise, this is the famous principle indicated in the previous lesson, that is, the proximate and immediate agent of all motions is nature, and no motion can be directly related to an immaterial agent.

As for the second premise, it may be further explained that if the proximate and immediate cause of an effect were a stationary object, its result would also be a stationary.

In order to make this easier to understand, the following example may be used: if a lamp were in a fixed place the light which radiates from it would illuminate all within a specific radius, but if the lamp were in motion, the extent of its illumination would gradually advance. Hence, the process of moving accidents which advance in the realm of time shows that their cause also is in process along with them.

Perhaps it will be asked, if the nature of a substance is essentially in motion, then why are its effects, which are accidents, sometimes without motion? And why cannot the immobility of accidents be reason for the immobility of the nature of a substance?

These question can be answered as follows. The nature of a substance is not a complete cause of motion, rather, its effectiveness depends on specific conditions whose satisfaction brings about motions in accidents, and motion is an action which requires a natural agent, even if the agent is not the complete cause of its occurrence. Immobility, to the contrary, is a negative thing (the absence of motion), and cannot be considered to be an action in need of an agent.

On the other hand, it may be asked whether the proponents of substantial motion are not forced to relate substantial motion to immaterial agents, which are fixed, unchangeable and devoid of motion. Why do they not accept accidental motion for fixed substances as valid?

The answer is that substantial motion is the very existence of the substance, and is merely in need of a divine generative agent, and the granting of existence to the substance is the same as the granting of existence to the substantial motion. However, the granting of existence to the substance is not the same as the granting of existence to accidents and to motion in accidents.

For this reason, the motion in accidents is related to substantial nature, and is considered an action for it. Such an action is in need of a natural agent whose transformation shows a transformation in its agent.

Another very precise objection can also be raised against this argument, the answer to which is not as easy as the answer to the previous two objections. According to Sadr al-Muta'allihin's own explanation, motion is not a entified object independent of its source of abstraction, the flowing existence of a substance or accident. Hence, whether it is assumed to be in a substance or in an accident, motion will be the same as the existence of that substance or accident, and its cause will be the cause of the existence of that substance or accident.

Therefore, what prevents us from relating the flowing existence of an accident directly to a divine or metaphysical agent and to consider the role of substance in its occurrence as the role of matter for the occurrence of form rather than as the efficient cause ('illat fa'ili)? If this assumption is correct, there will be no way to infer substantial motion from the agency of substance for its accidents and their motions. In fact, this objection arises from doubts about the first premise.

But, in any case, this argument at most will be of benefit to those who consider the agency of substantial nature for their accidents and motions to be debatable.

2. The second argument also has two premises. One is that accidents do not have existence independent of their subjects, but rather they are really aspects of the existence of substance. The second premise is that every kind of change that occurs in an aspect of an existent, is a change in the existent itself, and indicates its own internal and essential change. It is concluded that motions in accidents indicate changes in the existence of a substance.

In explaining this argument, Sadr al-Muta'allihin says that every corporeal existent has a single existence which is in itself determinate and individual (as was explained in Lesson Twenty-Five). The accidents of every substance are appearances or rays of its existence, which may be considered signs of individuation ('alamat tashakhkhus) for it and not as causes of its individuation. Therefore, a change in these signs indicates a change in that which bears the sign; hence, motion in accidents indicates motion in the existence of a substance.

This argument does not depend on the assumption that motion in accidents is an effect of substantial nature, but rather accidents are introduced as appearances and aspects of the existence of a substance. This position is acceptable in the case of continuous quantities because the dimensions and extensions of corporeal existents are nothing but their visages, as was explained in Lesson Forty-Seven.

It can also be applied in the case of qualities specific to quantity, such as geometrical shapes. However, relative categories, as was mentioned repeatedly, are abstract concepts and only the source of abstraction of some of them, such as time and space, can be considered to be aspects of the existence of substance, which reduce to continuous quantities.

The existence of psychic (nafsani) qualities (which in a precise sense are objective accidents, although in a sense they may be considered to be appearances and aspects of the psyche) is not the same as the existence of the psyche. Rather, there is a sort of union (not unity) between these qualities and the

psyche, and for this reason, the application of this argument for such accidents is difficult.

3. The third argument given by Sadr al-Muta'allihin for substantial motion is obtained from knowledge of the reality of time as a flowing and passing dimension of material existents, and the logical form of this argument is as follows.

All material existents are in time and have a temporal dimension. Every existent which has a temporal dimension has gradual existence. In conclusion, the existence of a material substance will be gradual, that is, possessing motion.

The first premise was made clear in Forty-Three, from which it may be concluded that time is the passing extension of corporeal existence, not an independent vessel in which they are contained. If material phenomena did not have such a passing extension, they could not be measured with temporal scales, such as clocks, days, months and years.

Likewise, if they did not have spatial extensions and geometrical dimensions, they could not be measured by length, area and volume. Basically, the measurement of everything by a specific scale shows the homogeneity between them. Therefore, the weight of something can never be measured by the scale of length or vice versa.

It is for this reason that completely immaterial things do not have a temporal duration, and they cannot be considered temporally prior to or posterior to an event, for their immutable existences are not homogeneous with the passing and renewing extension of time.

The second premise can be explained as follows. Time is passing so that its potential parts are brought about successively. One part of it does not occur until another part passes, while the entirety of its supposed parts has a single existence.

It we understand the nature (haqiqat) of time; we will readily discover that every existent which possesses this sort of extension in its essence will have a gradual existence and will have parts spread out in the channel of time. Its temporal extension is divisible into successive potential parts no two of which can be brought together. Until one of them passes and is annihilated another part will not be brought into existence.

Given these two premises, it can be concluded that the existence of a corporeal substance is gradual, passing, and constantly renewed, and this is the meaning of substantial motion.

In explaining this argument, Sadr al-Muta'allihin says that just as a material substance has geometrical and spatial dimensions, it also has another continuous quantity called time (which constitutes its fourth dimension), and just as its instantaneous extension is an essential attribute of its existence, and has no existence separate from that of the material substance, likewise its gradual extension is an inseparable and essential attribute for it.

And just as the individual ipseity of a corporeal substance is never brought about without geometrical dimensions, likewise it cannot occur without the temporal dimension. No corporeal substance can be imagined to be fixed and detached from time, and therefore as related equally to all times. So, time is a constituent of the existence of every corporeal substance. This implies that the existence of every corporeal substance is gradual and that its supposed parts are brought into existence successively and by constant renewal.

This argument is the firmest of the arguments for substantial motion, and there appear to be no problems with it.

Lesson 60: Further Discussion of Substantial Motion

A Reminder of Some Points

An important problem regarding substantial motion has been raised which will be reviewed at the end of this section, but prior to this, there are several points which should be borne in mind.

1. Substantial motion is really the instant to instant renewal of the existence of a substance, and bears no relation to the motion of the stars, galaxies and nebula, or to the motions of atoms and molecules or the motion of particles around the nuclei of atoms.

Even if motion within the nucleus is assumed, this will have no relation to substantial motion, because these motions are spatial and accidental, while substantial motion is basically a philosophical and intellectual notion and not a scientific or empirical one.

2. Accidents which appear to be stationary and motionless have constant imperceptible motion, for their existences are also extended in the channel of time, and until one of their temporal parts is annihilated, another part will not appear.

Therefore, the entire material world is continuously being annihilated and renewed. No stationary and immobile existent is to be found. In other words, the existence of immobility is relative and absolute immobility does not exist.

3. It is possible for a material existent to possess numerous motions at a single time, as the planet earth, like all material substances, has substantial motion, and on that basis, its existence is constantly being renewed and likewise all its attributes and accidents are continuously being renewed in existence.

Furthermore, it rotates on its axis while it revolves around the sun, and it also has other motions which have been established by astrophysicists.

Likewise, it is possible for a body subordinate to another moving body to possess one or more subordinate motions. For example, as the existents on the earth are subordinate to it, they possess motion subordinate to it, even if they do not move independently, just as the earth itself has a motion subordinate to that of the solar system in the galaxy, it also has a motion in space subordinate to that of the galaxy.

Therefore, the unity of a moving thing is no reason for the unity of motion, although the individual unity of motion would be meaningless without the unity of the moving object.

4. Sometimes, numerous motions are directly attributed to a moving object, but sometimes, motion occurs in a moving object by means of another motion, without which it could not occur, as in the serpentine motion of the earth which is obtained by means of its revolutions, which is in fact an attribute of this motion, or the motion of an automobile which is attributed to the gradual increase or decrease of its speed (acceleration), or the substantial motion of bodies, which are attributed with intensity and perfection. These sorts of motions are called motions superimposed on motions.

5. As was previously said, the concept of speed is obtained through the relation between time and distance. Hence, speed is not attributed to time itself, and naturally, acceleration or the increase and decrease in speed will also have no meaning for time.

Therefore, when it is said that time has passed quickly or slowly, this is called ‘psychological time’ and is a loose way of speaking, and it depends on the quality of the perception of the passage of time. Such ideas may also be applied to physical time.

Types of Substantial Motion

Substantial motion, like other kinds of motion does not by itself necessitate perfection and intensity, and the arguments for its existence do not prove anything more than gradual change and renewal of the existence of a substance. Therefore, as in the case of accidental motion, three states may be posited for it, or it may be divided into three types:

1. Constant motion in which all the potential parts of the substance are equal with respect to perfection and level of existence.

2. Intensifying motion in which every assumed part is more perfect than the previous part.

3. Weakening or declining motion in which every part is weaker and more defective than its predecessor.

Intensifying and weakening motions can be considered to be composed of two motions: (1) one which

occurs to the moving thing by means of another; (2) motion without an intermediary, which represents the persistence of a substance, whereas the mediated motion represents its perfection or decline.

It is like accelerating motion, whose increase or decrease in speed is considered an ascending or declining motion over spatial or another kind of motion. A motion that begins with positive acceleration and then has negative acceleration can be represented in the form of a straight line over which from the beginning a curve rises and then falls back to meet the straight line at its end point. The ascending curve represents positive acceleration, and the descending curve represents negative acceleration.

This picture has a clearer instance in the case of substances which possess two compound forms, in such a way that the underlying form possesses a constant substantial motion, whose level of existence does not become more perfect nor decline, while the higher form possesses rising and declining motion.

For example, the component elements of a plant remain in the same condition in which they began, while the vegetable form gradually becomes more perfect, and then enters the state of withering and decaying, and at last it rots and is destroyed. This is the point at which the descending curve joins the straight line.

Those who rely on some other definitions of motion have inferred the necessity of its becoming perfect, and so, in the case of substantial motion, they have also held that its intensification and becoming more perfect are necessary, even if our senses are not able to perceive this intensification. In the same way, they have considered declining or weakening motions to be accidental. In Lesson Fifty–Seven, this inference was criticized and its weakness was made clear. There is no reason to repeat it again.

The Relation between Substantial Motion and Actuality and Potentiality

As was previously explained, the potential and the actual are two abstract concepts abstracted from the relation between two successive existents, and from the persistence of the previous existent or a part of it in the following existent.

Now, regarding the fact that all material existents are constantly in a state of renewal and coming about and passing away, the question will be raised as to how the existence of the previous existent can be imagined, and how the definition of potential and actual can apply to the beginning and end of the motion.

Sometimes the answer is given that although the previous existent does not itself remain, the perfection of its existence is preserved in the following existent. It is concluded that every motion is a becoming perfect and intensification.

However, not only does this conclusion fail to agree with entified reality, but the answer itself does not

solve the basic problem, for given the annihilation of the previous existent, the preservation of its perfections can mean only that the succeeding existent is more perfect than the previous one, and this reduces to the fact that the preservation of something from a potential existent in an actual existent is not necessary.

This meaning is compatible with the assumption of the succession of numerous existents each of which is more perfect than the other, and with the interpretation of motion as a succession of actualities which is governed by the principle of 'a succession of rests.'

It might be said that according to the position of the constancy of motion, the earlier and later parts are not numerically different in actuality, but all of them are an existent with a single existence. This is contrary to the position of a succession of rests, according to which each of the temporal parts will have a specific actual existence. According to the former position, a single flowing existence is infinitely analyzable, contrary to the latter position which is based on finite unanalyzable parts.

However, the discussion is not about the potential parts of motion, but about the potential and actual as the beginnings and ends of motion which are outside the scope of the motion itself. This may be explained further by pointing out that motion has been defined as the gradual process of the emergence of the actual from the potential, such that the potential is the beginning of the motion and the actual is its end.

However, to call the earlier part of motion potential in relation to a later part is to use a specialized expression, according to which the perseverance of something from the earlier part is not considered necessary, and in this way there no longer remains room for a gradual process from potentiality to actuality and a temporal gap between them.

It seems that the application of the above definition to substantial motion is extremely difficult. It is only in the case of the compound forms whose underlying form is a previous existent that it can be considered potential in relation to the occurrence of the higher form, which is the substantial motion itself, although this higher form is the very motion, for the perseverance of a part of its motion is sufficient during the occurrence of the higher form.

However, in the case of simple and constant substantial motion the potential and actual cannot be proven to be two existents outside the scope of motion as its beginning and end.

If we assume that there is nothing but a simple body in the world, and throughout time it remains with the same constant level of existence, and that its potential parts continuously come into existence and are annihilated, is it necessary for there to exist an existent prior to or after it as its beginning or end? Therefore, it becomes clear why it is preferable to define motion generally as 'gradual change' rather than in the other ways proposed.

The Continuity of Substantial Motion

In Lesson Twenty-Nine, the unity of the world was discussed, and different meanings which have been assumed for it were reviewed. However, the establishment of unity in none of the mentioned senses depended on the establishment of substantial motion. Sometimes, substantial motion is used as a justification to establish the unity of the material world, and the unity of the world is even considered to be one of the conclusions of the doctrine of substantial motion.

It is said that with the establishment of substantial motion, the entire material world will be a single substantial motion, from each of whose slices a specific whatness is abstracted, and the multiplicity of material existents depends upon the numerical differences among these essences.

This subject may be interpreted to mean that the accidents and motions of a material existent are aspects and representations of the existence of a substance. In fact, their existences are derived from the existence of the substance. The material substances themselves are in fact continuous substantial motions which can be considered a single existent given their attachment to each other. On this basis it may be claimed that the entire material cosmos is a single continuous existent.

The continuity of substantial motions may be interpreted in two ways: one is the continuity of motions which are brought about successively during time, which may be called vertical continuity; and the other is the continuity of simultaneous motions which occur along with each other, which may be called horizontal continuity. Therefore, each of the two forms will be discussed separately.

Vertical Continuity

Regarding the vertical continuity of material existents and their substantial motions, it can be said that every particular material existent which may be considered is a particular substantial motion which appears in matter. For example, the existence of a plant is a substantial motion which occurs in its component elements. But its prior matter also has a substantial motion in its own turn.

Likewise, however far we go back we always reach another substantial motion, and among them there is never any gap brought about by rest. Therefore, it can be said that successive phenomena are a single substantial motion possessing numerous slices, from each of which specific whatnesses are abstracted.

This explanation is debatable in two respects. First, it is not the case that each of the particular slices possesses a single existence and a single substantial motion; rather it is possible that a compound existent may be compound in several ways and possess several substantial motions, as was established in Lesson Fifty-Four.

Second, the continuity of two successive substantial motions will have unity in a real sense when there is no distinctive boundary between them, while the transformation of one material existent to another is not

like this. The reason for this is that there are various effects for each of them.

For example, vegetative effects, that is, growth and reproduction, are new effects which appear in matter, and there is no precedent for this in lifeless matter, and it begins when the vegetable form occurs in matter. Even if the vegetable form is the same as the vegetable substantial motion, it possesses a determinate boundary which separates it from the substantial motion of the previous matter. In other words, in the extension of the substantial motion of matter there are points which are boundaries between mineral and vegetable, and from these points new substantial motions appear which can be shown by a curved line which meets the underlying straight line at two points.

Therefore, successive substantial motions are continuous linear fragments which are distinguished from one another by specific points, each of which linear fragments possesses its own characteristics.

Since these points are drawn by means of the higher lines, the underlying straight line which continues through time can be considered a single line which shows the continuous unity of the prime matter of the cosmos through time. And it is only in this sense that the unity of the material cosmos can be established.

Horizontal Continuity

Regarding the horizontal continuity of material existents and their substantial motion, it may be said that since nothingness has not made any gaps between the parts of matter, and there is no pure vacuum between them, all of them possess a unity of continuity, and this unified thing possesses a single substantial motion.

Aside from the fact that in the above explanation the continuity of substantial motion is inferred from the unity of matter, not that the unity of the cosmos is established through the unity of substantial motion, there is another problem with this view, that is, the unity of continuity for the matter of the cosmos is no reason for the unity of its forms and the unity of their substantial motions, for it is obvious that each of the forms possesses a distinctive boundary and particular effects which have no relation to the effects of the common matter. Therefore, the correctness of the doctrine of the horizontal continuity of material existents and their substantial motion is merely due to the unity and continuity of their matter.

This sort of unity and continuity is not incompatible with the multiplicity of forms and their generation and corruption.

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 shakhsi), 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 his point the reason for the selection by the divine sages of the expression 'the Necessary Existent' 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 Existent, 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.[1] 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

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."[3] 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 affect 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 Existent

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 Existent.

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 Existent.

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 Existent 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 Existent, 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 Existent.

This demonstration was formulated by Ibn Sina (Shaykh al-Ra'is) in his Isharat as follows. An existent is either the Necessary Existent or a contingent existent. If it is the Necessary Existent, the point is proven, and if it is a contingent existent, it must ultimately lead to the Necessary Existent 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 Existent is proven, and in the second case, unavoidably one must accept the existence of the Necessary Existent because contingent existents need a cause and in order to avoid a circle or regress, the chain of causes must end with the Necessary Existent.

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 respectivalness 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.[1]

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.[2]

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.[3] 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 haqiqiyyah' (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 entified 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.[1]

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 yakhluq 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 (qudrah), and most mutakallamin 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 (Isharqiyyin) 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.[1] 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).[2]

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,[1] 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 gharadh) 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,[1] 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,[2] and on the other hand, the purpose of the creation of man is declared to be the worship of God, the Supreme.[3] Finally, the ultimate purpose is considered to be proximity to the divine mercy and to benefit from eternal triumph, welfare and felicity.[4]

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.

1. 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.
2. See 11:7; 67:2; 18:7.
3. See 51:56; 36:61.
4. 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 and 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-

qiyas), 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-mahiyyatu 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 ‘ilmi), 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– sufficience 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 inm'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).[1] 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.

1. 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 overweigh 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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