Belief in the Reality of the Unseen Involves More than God

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One of the characteristics of the unique God to the knowledge and worship of Whom Prophets and religious leaders summon us is that He is utterly inaccessible to sense perception. In addition He possesses the attributes of pre-eternity and post-eternity. Existing everywhere He is nowhere. Throughout the world of nature and sensory being His manifestations have an objective existence and His will is everywhere manifest in the world of being all the phenomena of nature declaring the power of that wise Essence.

Of course such a being that man cannot perceive with his senses that is not in any way colored by materiality and that does not correspond to our normal experience and observation is extremely difficult for us to imagine. Once the existence of a thing is difficult to imagine it becomes easy to deny it.

Those who want to solve the question of existence of God within the framework of their own intellectual limitations and narrowness of vision ask how it is possible to believe in an unseen being. They overlook the fact that sense perception being limited can help man to know and perceive only one mode of being; it cannot discover other modes of being and penetrate all the dimensions of existence. Sensory organs do not permit us to advance a single step beyond the outer aspects of phenomena in just the same way that the empirical sciences cannot carry human thought beyond the boundaries of the supra-sensory.

If man through the application of scientific instruments and criteria cannot perceive the existence of a thing he cannot deny its existence simply because it is incompatible with material criteria unless he disposes of some proof that the thing in question is impossible.

We discover the existence of an objective law from within the totality of phenomena that t it is capable of interpreting. If then the establishment of scientific truth is possible only by means of direct sensation the majority of scientific truths will have to be discarded since many scientific facts cannot be perceived by means of sensory experience or testing.

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As far as the realities of the material world are concerned no rational person will commonly regard his not seeing or not sensing a given thing in his everyday life as grounds enough to deny it. He will not condemn as non-existent whatever fails to enter the sphere of his sense perception. This same will hold true a fortiori of nonmaterial realities.

When we are unable to establish the cause of something in a scientific experiment this does

not lead us to deny the law of causality. We say only that the cause is unknown to us because the law is independent of a given experiment; no experiment can lead to the negation of causality.

Is it not true that all the things we accept and believe to exist have an existence belonging to the same category as our own or as things that are visible to us? Can we see or feel everything in this material world? Is it only God we cannot see with our senses?

All materialists are aware that many of the things known to us consist of matters and realities that we cannot sense and with which we are not customarily familiar. There are many invisible beings in the universe. The progress of science and knowledge in the present age have uncovered numerous truths of this kind and one of the richest chapters in scientific research is the transformation of matter into energy.

When the beings and bodies that are visible in this world wish to produce energy they are compelled to change their original aspect and transform it into energy. Now is this energy—the axis on which turn many of the motions and changes of the universe— visible or tangible?

We know that energy is a source of power but the essence of energy still remains a mystery. Take electricity on which so much of our science civilization and life depend. No physicist in his laboratory—or anyone else for that matter dealing with electrical tools and appliances—can see electricity itself or feel and touch its weight or softness. No one can directly perceive the passage of electricity through a wire; he can only perceive the existence of a current by using the necessary equipment.

Modern physics tells us that the things of which we have sense perception are firm solid and stable and there is no visible energy in their motions. But despite outward appearances what we in fact see and perceive is a mass of atoms that are neither firm nor solid nor stable; all things are nothing other than transformation change and motion. What our sense organs imagine to be stable and motionless lack all stability and permanence and immobility; motion change and development embrace them all without this being perceptible to us by way of direct sensory observation.

The air that surrounds us has a considerable weight and exerts a constant pressure on the body; everyone bears a pressure of 16 000 kilograms of air. But we do not feel any discomfort because the pressure of the air is neutralized by the inward pressure of the body. This established scientific fact was unknown until the time of Galileo and Pascal and even now our senses cannot perceive it.

The attributes assigned to natural factors by scientists on the basis of sensory experiments and rational deductions cannot be directly perceived. For example radio waves are present

everywhere and yet nowhere. There is no locus that is free of the attractive force of some material body but this in no way detracts from its existence or lessens its substance. Concepts such as justice beauty love hatred enmity wisdom that make up our mental universe do not have a visible and clear-cut existence or the slightest physical aspect; nonetheless we regard them as realities. Man does not know the essence of electricity of radio waves or energy of electrons and neutrons; he perceives their existence only through their results and effects.

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Life very clearly exists; we cannot possibly deny it. But how can we measure it and by what means can we measure the speed of thought and imagination?

From all this it is quite clear that to deny whatever lies beyond our vision and hearing is contrary to logic and the conventional principles of reason. Why do the deniers of God fail to apply the common principles of science to the particular question of the existence of a power ruling over nature? A certain materialist of Egypt went to Mecca in order to engage in debate and there he met Imam Sadiq upon whom be peace. The Imam said Begin your questioning.

The Egyptian said nothing.

The Imam: "Do you accept that the earth has an above and a below?"

The Egyptian: "Yes."

The Imam: "So how do you know what is below the earth?"

The Egyptian: "I do not know but I think there is nothing below the earth." The Imam: "Imagining is a sign of impotence when confronted with what you cannot be certain of. Now tell me have you ever been up in the skies?" The Egyptian: "No."

The Imam: "How strange it is that you have not been to the West or to the East that you have not descended below the earth or flown up to the heavens or passed beyond them to know what lies there but nonetheless you deny what exists there. Would any wise man deny the reality of what he is ignorant of? And you deny the existence of the Creator because you cannot see him with your eyes."

The Egyptian: "No one talked to me before in this way."

The Imam: "So in fact you have doubts concerning the existence of God; you think He may exist and He may not exist?" The Egyptian: "Perhaps so."

The Imam: "O man the hands of one who does not know are empty of all proof; the ignorant can never possess any kind of evidence. Be well aware that we never have any kind of doubt or hesitation concerning the existence of God. Do you not see the sun and the moon the day and the night regularly alternating and following a fixed course? If they have any power of their own

let them depart from their course and not return. Why do they constantly return? If they are free in their alternation and rotation why does the night not become day and the day not become night? I swear by God that they have no free choice in their motions; it is He Who causes these phenomena to follow a fixed course; it is He Who commands them; and to Him alone belongs all greatness and splendor."

The Egyptian: "You speak truly."

The Imam: "If you imagine that nature and time carry men forward then why do they not carry them backwards? And if they carry them backwards why do they not carry them forward?" "Know that the heavens and the earth are subject to His Will Why do the heavens not collapse onto the earth? Why are the layers of the earth not overturned and why do they not mount up to the heavens? Why do those who live on the earth not adhere to each other?"

The Egyptian: "God Who is the Lord and Master of the heavens and earth protects them from collapse and destruction."

"The words of the Imam had now caused the light of faith to shine on the heart of the Egyptian; he submitted to the truth and accepted Islam."

Let us not forget that we are imprisoned in the framework of matter and its dimensions; we cannot imagine an absolute being with our customary habits of thought. If we tell a villager that a greatand populouscity exists called London he will conceive in his mind of some big village maybe ten times bigger than his own and the same with respect to its buildings the way people dress their way of life and dealings with each other. He will assume that the characteristics of people everywhere are the same as in his own village.

The only thing we can tell him to correct the unrealistic way he thinks is that London is indeed a place of settlement but not of the kind you imagine and its characteristics are not of the same kind you see in your own village.

What we can say concerning God is that God exists and that He possesses life power and knowledge but His existence and knowledge and power are not of the kind familiar to us. In this way we can to some extent escape the restrictions placed on our understanding. For the materialist too it is impossible to conceive of the essence of primary matter.

Although it appears that sense objects are the things we know most clearly and precisely we cannot rely exclusively on such objects in scientific and philosophical matters. Laying aside all fanatical attitudes we must assess the true nature of sense objects and the degree to which they can aid men in uncovering the truth. Otherwise they will mislead us because sense perception relates only to certain qualities of the external aspect of sense objects. It cannot perceive the totality of those qualities or the essence and mere substance of sense objects let

alone non-sensing objects.

The eye that is the surest means for the perception of reality is in many cases unable to show reality to us. It can observe lights only when their wave length is not less than 4% microns and more than 8% microns and therefore it cannot see lights higher than violet or lower than red. In addition the errors made by sense perception form an important section in books on psychology: the eye is known to commit numerous errors.

The colors we recognize in the external world are in fact not colors. They are vibrations on different wave lengths. Our visual sense experiences have different wave lengths of light in accordance with its own particular mechanism as colors. In other words what we perceive by means of our senses is limited by the structure and capacity of those senses. For example the structure of the visual sense in certain animals such as cows and cats causes them to see monotone external reality as colored. From the viewpoint of scientific analysis the nature of the mechanism in man's visual sense that permits him to see colors is not entirely clear and the theories put forward so far are all hypothetical. The question of man's ability to see colors is obscure and complex.

In order to see how the sense of touch may be deceived you can fill three bowls with water: the first with very hot water the second with very cold water and the third with lukewarm water. Then place one hand in hot water and the other in cold water and leave them there for a time. Then place them both in lukewarm water and you will see to your great surprise that you experience contradictory sensations. One hand will tell you that the lukewarm water is extremely cold and the other will proclaim that it is extremely hot. Of course the water is one and the same and its temperature is known.

Now reason and logic say that it is not possible for water to be both cold and hot at the same time to have two contradictory attributes. It is the sense of touch that is at fault having lost its self-control as a result of the two bowls of water in which the hands were immersed. What it feels is at variance with the truth and reason and the mind point out its error.

This being the case how can we rely on sense perception without the guidance of the intellect and mental criteria? Is there any way to protect ourselves against the errors of sense perception other than rational judgment?

Once someone asked the Commander of the Believers upon whom be peace Have you seen your Lord?

He answered: "I will never worship a Lord whom I cannot see."

The man then asked: "How did you see him? Explain it to us." He replied Woe upon you! No one has ever seen Him with the physical eye, but hearts filled with the truth of faith have

contemplated Him. It is then the judgment of reason that is entrusted with the task of correcting the errors of sense perception and the source of that judgment lies beyond the sensory realm.

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Sense perception cannot therefore yield a realistic vision; its only value is practical. Those who rely exclusively on sense perception in their investigations will never be able to solve the problems of existence and the riddle of creation.

From our assessment of the competence of sense perception we reach the conclusion that even in the empirical sensory realm it is unable to bestow alone certain knowledge on man and to guide him to the truth. A fortiori the same is true of matters that are beyond sensory perception. The followers of metaphysics are convinced that in just the same way that experiment and testing are the method of investigation and cognition to be followed in the sensory sciences it is intellection that is the means of discovering the truth in metaphysical .matters

The Primality of the Life Principle

Science says it is life that creates life. The life of animate beings is possible only by means of generation procreation and the reproduction of species. No single cell has yet been discovered that was born from lifeless matter. Even the lowest forms of living being such as fungi and parasites cannot come into existence and grow unless a cause that itself partakes of life is to be found in its environment.

According to the testimony of science the earth went through long periods in which there was no possibility of life because of the extreme heat prevailing. No vegetation was to be seen on the face of the planet and there were no rivers or springs. The atmosphere was full of molten metals and volcanic eruptions. Later when the crust of the earth began to cool only inorganic matter could be found there for millions of years. In short throughout the tumultuous changes that took place on the surface of the earth there was no trace of life on it. How then did life suddenly gush forth?

There is no doubt life came into being some time after the appearance of the earth; how long that process took and how it came about is not known. For centuries researchers have been striving in their laboratories to uncover the mystery of life this truly remarkable phenomenon but they have not yet come any closer to solving the riddle.

One researcher writes in the book Distant Worlds What a bewitching word is life! Did existence come into being from non-existence? Can organic matter emerge from inorganic matter? Or is

some powerful and creative hand at work? It is sometimes suggested that life may have come to our planet from other heavenly bodies, because when the lowest forms of life—the seeds of vegetable microbes—swimming in the atmosphere of a heavenly body rise to a great elevation, the rays of the sun may carry them by means of pressure into space, so that they ultimately reach the surface of another heavenly body where they flourish and develop.

This hypothesis does not represent the slightest progress in the solution of the great riddle because if the hypothesis be true we still do not know how life appeared whether on one of the planets in the solar system or one of the Great Dog stars. Just as a clock is not made by heaping together springs cogs bolts and levers so too the creation of life is not possible in the absence of a heart—i.e. that which sets life in motion—and a summons that proclaims 'come to life!"

We know that matter in and of itself lacks life and that no material element possesses life unaided. Thus life cannot be supposed to proceed from the harmonious compounding of the atoms that make up matter. The question arises why living matter cannot repeat itself other than by procreation and reproduction of the species. Chemical actions and reactions are constantly underway in inanimate bodies without any trace of life being reflected in them. To say that matter is inclined to compounding and that life suddenly emerged in the course of its development and evolution is to describe the living and vital phenomena we sensorially observe; it is not to explain the origin of life and its cause.

Moreover the particles of matter were not originally incompatible with each other; a cause must therefore have operated to bring about the compounding of some of them and to prevent the compounding of others. And what is the cause for some particles being endowed with life and others deprived of it?

The only thing to result from the compounding of two or more elements is that each element gives to the other some of the properties it possesses; how should it make a gift of something it does not possess? The elements acquire a common property as a result of compounding a property that cannot go beyond the properties that each possess but life with its unique character bears no similarity to the properties of matter. Life displays itself in ways of which matter is incapable and in many respects indeed life dominates matter. Although life appears to be dependent on matter matter being the mould which receives it motion will and ultimately perception and knowledge appear in matter only when life casts its rays upon it. It is therefore unjustifiable to attempt to interpret life in terms of chemical reactions.

What factor is it that manufactures cells in numerous different varieties and with different programs and then inserts them in a planned form? It prepares reproductive cells that transfer

the characteristics and peculiarities of fathers to their offspring without the slightest error occurring in the performance of that function.

We see that life cells have certain particular characteristics in their composition among which are repair reconstruction preservation of the species and the capacity for variation.

Every cell in man functions at the required time and in the required manner. The distribution of labor and function among cells is remarkable. They are distributed in the quantity needed to assure growth of the body and every cell goes to its appointed place in the brain the lungs the liver the heart and the kidneys. Once the cells have taken up their appointed positions they do not fail for an instant in performing their vital functions; they disperse and repel superfluous and useless matter and preserve exactly their proper volume.

To ascribe this remarkable classification which has the purpose of forming in due proportion the limbs and organs needed by animate beings to mechanical and unconscious factors is a completely inadequate interpretation. What freely thinking person would accept such illogicality? Life is then a light which shines from lofty horizons on material entities that have the capacity to receive it; it sets them in motion and puts each intelligently in its particular locus.

It is the guiding will of the Creator His power to decide in a way that ensures movement and development toward perfection and His comprehensive and far-reaching wisdom that bestow the great miracle of life with all its properties on lifeless matter. A man who is aware of the truth sees a constant thread of life running through the changing and moving substance of matter. He contemplates God in His aspect of continuous creation and origination His ceaseless impelling of all things toward perfection.