# Belief in God, the Exalted

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Since the earliest times of human history, man had attained faith in God, worshipped Him alone in sincerity and manifested a deep relationship with Him. This took place before man reached any stage of purely philosophical reasoning or the comprehension of the methods of demonstration. This faith was not the child of class struggle, nor was it the invention of exploiters or tyrants as a justification of their exploitation. It was not the invention of the exploited in order to justify their own suffering.

This is because faith has preceded all such conflicts in human history. Faith in God was not born out of fear and the feeling of awe in the face of natural catastrophes and nature's unpredictable behavior.

For, had faith been born of fear, or had it been the result of awe, then the most religious among men throughout history would have been the ones most given to fear and dread. On the contrary, those who have carried the torch of faith across the ages have been people of great strength, of character and will.

This faith, rather, expresses a fundamental inclination in man to be devoted to his Creator. It manifests a pure conscience enabling him to discern the connection between man and his Lord and between God and the universe which He created.

In the next stage, man reached metaphysical thinking and inferred from things around him in the universe general concepts such as being (wujud) and non-being (`adam), possibility (imkan) and impossibility (istihalah), unity (wahdah) and multiplicity (kathrah), compositeness (tarakkub) and simplicity (basatah), part (juz') and whole (kull), priority (taqaddum) and posteriority (ta'akhkhur) and cause ('illah) and effect (ma'lul).

Man then tended to use these concepts and apply them to the construction of arguments in support of his original faith in God, praised and exalted be He, and to justify and explain it in philosophical terms.

When, however, scientific experimentation began, to appear, as a tool of. knowledge; and thinker thus realized that these general concepts in themselves were inadequate for the study of nature and the discovery of its laws and for the uncovering of the secrets of the universe, they believed sense perception and scientific observation to be the principle avenue of any pursuit of these secrets and laws.

This orientation toward sense perception in investigation generally enhanced human

knowledge of the universe and broadened it to a high degree. This trend began its march by asserting that sense perception and experimentation are two of the most important tools which human reason and knowledge must employ in pursuit of the discovery of the secrets of the universe and its all-encompassing order.

Thus instead of a Greek thinker. like Aristotle, for instance, sitting in his closed room and pondering over the relationship between the motion of a body in space and the power of a body moving it, and then deciding that the motion of that body would cease with the cessation of the moving power, instead of that, Galileo began his experiments and continued his observation of moving bodies to infer a relationship of a different sort. He asserted that a body encountering an external force which moved it would not cease its motion, even when that force ceased until it encountered another force. which arrested its motion.

This empirical trend meant encouragement for investigators of nature and the laws governing its phenomena to arrive at their conclusions in two stages. The first is observation by the senses and experimentation, and the gathering of results from these. The second is a rational stage consisting of the arranging and harmonizing of these results and the interpretation of them in a general and acceptable manner.

This trend, however, as a scientific method, was not meant to take the place of reason. Nor was any scientist able to discover a secret of the universe or a law of nature simply by observation by the senses and experimentation without the aid of reason. This is because a scientist must always analyze the data gathered through observation by the senses and experimentation in order to reach conclusions through the use of his rational faculty.

We know of no great scientific investigation which has been able to dispense with the second stage in favour of: the first, or that did not go; from, the first to the second stage, as .has already been indicated. Thus the problems of the first stage would be matters of sense perception,., while those of the second, conclusions based on rational proofs discerned by the mind, but not matters of direct sense perception.

Thus, for instance, with regard to the law of gravity, Newton did not feel directly the gravitational force of two bodies. Nor did he feel that this force was proportional to the inverse of the square of the distance between the centres of mass of the two bodies, and directly proportional to the product of the masses of the two bodies.[1]

Rather he perceived the stone as it came down towards the ground and the moon rotating around the earth and the planets around the sun. He pondered all this and endeavoured to interpret these phenomena, relying on Galileo's theory of the uniform acceleration of bodies falling or rolling down inclined planes.[2]

He likewise made use of Kepler's laws of planetary motion, the third of which states, "The square of the period of rotation of a planet around the sun is proportional to the cube of its distance from it."[3] In the light of all this Newton discovered the law of gravity. He supposed that, "A gravitational force of attraction between two particles is always determined by the masses and the distance between them. "[4]

It should have been possible. for this empirical trend as a method of investigating the order of the universe to present a new and illuminating argument in support of faith in God, exalted be He. This should have been possible, in view of the fact that this method has uncovered aspects of harmony in the universe which can be used as proofs of an intelligent and wise Creator. Scientists, inasmuch as they are concerned with natural phenomena, have not interested themselves with the clarification of this problem, which has for long been considered as a metaphysical matter outside the scope of strictly scientific concern.

Soon, however, new directions appeared within the discipline of philosophy, outside the scope of natural science, which endeavoured to "philosophize" this empirical, method and present it in the terminology of formal logic. This new philosophy declared that the only means of knowledge is sense experience, and where sense perception ends human knowledge ceases. Thus whatever is inaccessible to the senses and cannot, be verified by direct experimentation, cannot be proved by any other means.

This. empirical and experimental trend was used to counter the idea of faith in God, the Exalted. Since God is not a being subject to sense experience, capable of being seen and felt, there is no way of proving His existence. The method was not employed by scientists, who practised the experimental method with success, but by people with different philosophical and logical inclinations, who attempted to interpret, but misapplied, the empirical method. They used it in accordance with their own inclinations. Gradually, these extreme approaches fell into conflict.

Prom the philosophical point of view, for instance, they found themselves obliged to deny objective reality, that is to say, to deny the reality of the universe in which we live, as a whole and in its details. This is because, they argued, there are no means of knowledge other than the senses.

The senses introduce us to things as we perceive them, not as they are in themselves. Therefore, when we perceive something, we can assert its existence in our sense perception. As for its existence outside our consciousness, that is, its objective existence in itself, independent of and prior to our act of experiencing it, we have no proof.

Thus when one sees the moon in the sky, for example, one is able only to assert his perception

of the moon at that instant. But the advocates of this new philosophy were unable to ascertain or demonstrate fully whether the moon exists in the sky in reality, or whether it had an objective existence before the viewer opened his eyes and saw it.

This is like a cross-eyed person seeing things which do not exist in reality: he can assert his own perception of these things but is unable to ascertain their actual existence. This new empirical trend in the end destroyed sense experience itself as an epistimological method, by making it the final arbiter of the limits of human knowledge. This meant that sense knowledge became a mere phenomenon of the mind, lacking objective existence independent of our consciousness and perception.

With regard to logical aspects, the logical positivist school, the most recent current school in the development of empiricist philosophy, came to the conclusion that every sentence the truth or falsehood of which cannot be verified by sense experience is simply, a cluster of empty words. It is like haphazard sounds of the alphabet repeated endlessly. The sentence, on the other hand, whose truth or falsehood may be verified, must be made up of meaningful words.

If sense experience can ascertain the agreement of its purport with reality, then it must be considered a true sentence. Thus the sentence, "Rain comes down from the sky in winter" is a true sentence. The sentence, "Rain comes down from the sky in summer", while being a meaningful sentence, is false in its purport.

The sentence, "Something comes down during the `Night of Power' (Laylatu'l-qadr)' [5] which can be neither seen nor felt", has no meaning regardless of whether it is true or false. Thus any report whose truth cannot be verified by the senses is nonsense. Therefore, with reference to the above sentence, it is like saying 'daas' descends from heaven on the Night of Power ('daas' being only a nonsense syllable).

The reference to a subject such as `daas' adds nothing to the truth value of a sentence. Hence, both sentences tell us nothing, even though the second provides a subject. From this it , Follows that the sentence, !"God exists" like saying "Daas exists", and the two reports are equally meaningless. This is so because . the existence of God, the Exalted, cannot be known through sense perception or experimentation.

This logical approach has its own inner contradiction because its own general premise cannot itself be verified by direct sense experience. In addition, it is, in its assertion, a meaningless premise. This logic, which claims that any report which sense experience cannot verify is meaningless, makes a general claim.

Every generalization, however, ipso facto goes beyond the realm of sense experience because senses can only perceive at any given moment individual objects or parts of a whole. This

approach, therefore, is not only self-contradictory, but also contradicts all scientific generalizations which we employ to explain natural phenomena in general terms. This is because generalization in any form cannot be verified by sense experience: It is rather inferred from observation of concrete and, limited phenomena of sense experience.[6]

Fortunately, however, science did not lend such philosophical trends ;any appreciable attention in its forward march and continuous evolution: Instead, scientists always began with sense perception and experimentation in their endeavour to discover the universe, but then went beyond this narrow approach which such schools of philosophy or logic had imposed on scientific investigation. Science must in the end endeavour to rationally arrange these phenomena within the framework of general laws and then go on to discover and explain their inter-relationships.

The influence of these extremist philosophical schools has greatly diminished even over the materialistic schools of philosophy. The new materialistic philosophy, as chiefly represented by the advocates of dialectical materialism, has clearly rejected these trends. Dialectical materialism gave itself the right to go beyond the framework of sense perception and experimentation with which a scientist begins his investigation; it sought to go even beyond the second stage with which a scientist must conclude his investigation.

This was necessary in order for the investigator to be able to compare the various results `of scientific theories and arrange them under a general theoretical set of rules and specify the relations between natural phenomena which these results presuppose.

Dialectical materialism, which is heir to materialistic thought down through history, has itself become an abstract philosophy from the point of view of these modern empirical extremist philosophical positions.

The new materialistic philosophy has finally arrived at a view of the world within a dialectical framework. This means that both materialistic and theistic thought have reached a consensus on the need to transcend the limits of sense experience, by which the new extremist materialistic schools advocated that science and philosophy be bound. It then becomes possible for investigation and knowledge to utilise two stages.

The first consists of collecting the results of sense experience and experimentation and the second of interpreting these results theoretically and rationally. The actual disagreement between the theistic and materialistic approaches is concerned with the way in which the conclusions reached in the second stage are to be interpreted. Materialism rejects any interpretation, which presupposes the , existence of wise Creator, while theism insists that the interpretation of these results can never. be ultimately convincing without the assumption of a

wise Creator.

We shall now present two modes of demonstration of the existence of the wise Creator, praised and exalted .be He. In each, the results of sense experience and experimentation will be presented on the one hand, and the rational influence in proof of our argument on the other. We shall call the first mode the scientific or inductive proof (ad-dalil al-istiqra'i) and the second the philosophical proof (ad-dalil al-falsafi) We must first, however, explain what we mean by scientific proof.

Scientific argument is any proof which depends on sense experience and experimentation. It follows, moreover, the method of inductive demonstration, which is based on the principle of the computation of probability (hisab al-ihtimalat). Hence, the method we shall follow, in demonstrating the existence of the Creator is scientific proof based on the method of inductive argument, which itself rests on the computation of probabilities.

(The method of the argument is not the argument itself. One may, for instance, demonstrate that the sun is bigger than the moon because scientists say so: The method `employed here is the acceptance of` the statement of scientists as a proof of the truth. You may argue that someone will die soon because you saw in a dream that that person actually died.

The method employed here is the use of dreams as an argument for the truth. Likewise, you may argue that the earth is a big bipolar magnetic field, possessing two poles, one negative, the other positive. The argument in this case is based on the fact that the needle of a compass which is set in a horizontal position faces north and south. The method followed here is the use of the experiment as proof.

Thus the validity of any argument is fundamentally related to the method on which it depends.)

For this reason we refer to the scientific argument for the existence of the Creator as the inductive proof. It will be our task now to clarify this method.

**Notes:**

[1]. On Newton's law of gravitation, see Classical Mechanics, H. Goldstein ( Redding, Mass.: Edison Wesley), fifth printing, 1957, p.65. (Translator's footnote)

[2]. Galileo's law of uniform accelerated motion is also Newton's second law of motion. See ibid., p. l . (Translator's footnote)

[3].On Keppler's laws of planetary motion, see ibid., p.80. ( Translator's footnote)

[4]. ibid., p.65. (Translator's footnote)

[5]. No one exactly knows when this night occurs, but tradition. has it that it comes during the month of Ramadan, perhaps the twenty-seventh. On .the essential significance of Laylatul -

qadr, see Qur'an, chapter 97. ( Translator's footnote)

.[6]. For greater detail, see our book al-Usus al-mantaqiyyah li'l-Istiqra', p.489