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Question 91: Is The Universe Dependent Upon Allah For Its Continued Existence?

Question: Some readers say that today some materialist people raise objection whose complete answer is not in our knowledge. You requested to give a satisfactory reply: “It is possible that we accept system of the Universe depended on the wise and powerful Creators. But the existence and continuity of this system there is no need of the Creator because when the Creator of the universe has made it in proper measure and subject to the system of cause and effect, whether the creator remains or not, this system will endure.

It is in the same way like a watch that shows the correct time. It will continue to tick even if its maker is no more. A space rocket moves ahead in space year after year and continues to send reports to us. While those who had made it are no more?

Answer: It is not a new objection that they materialists of today have presented. Rather its mention has also been made by the people of the past ages. And its reply is given in the books of philosophy and scholastic theology. In any case this objection is presented with two conditions.

Firstly An existing being which has a particular system is needful for a cause in the beginning of its creation. But for its survival it is not in need of a cause, whether it is the same cause or some other.

It is the same thing that the past philosophers believed. And imagined that just as a building is not in need for its builder for its endurance, in the same way any being is not in need of a cause to exist.

If objection is raised in this manner the reply is absolutely clear. Because according to the view of philosophy the survival of an existing thing is different from its initial creation. And in more clear words it can be said that the existence of everything is present in every time in addition to its being. The presence of a being in the time is like a drop of water in the sea whose shape goes on changing but its apparent form remains the same.

In others words just as an existing thing has parts and whose every part is not present without a cause. In the same way it has age and expanse with regard to the time who's each moment is in need of cause. Thus if any of the parts is not in need for survival it should not have been needy for its initial creation. Because there is no difference between the present moment and the time of its initial creation.

Please allow us to explain this in more detail: (Harkat-e-Jauhari and Izaafaat discussion). According to the last conclusion of the research of our philosophers, time distance is one of the four elements of the things. Thus as it is possible that with regard to the length, breadth and depth, two things may differ in distance, and one of them may be big and the other small. In the same way it is possible with regard to the time also that the distance of two things are different and just as any kind of increase or decrease is not possible in the distance of a body, in the same way the length of time and the age of things and happenings are in need of a cause.

Therefore if we say that a thing is not in need for a cause for its continuity it is like saying that a body 100 meters long was created only for the first meter and the remaining 99 meters came into being automatically. Can anyone accept this?

As far as the example of the "Clock and the Clock maker" and other such spurious examples we should remember that the clock is also dependant for its existence and creation on a cause. For its creation it depends on its maker, and for its existence it depends upon the parts of the metal that make it up and how strong is the metal of the parts. Therefore depending upon the difference in the durability of the parts the life a clock will differ. It is a clear proof a thing is dependent on a cause for its coming into being and also for its continued existence.

From whatever is mentioned above we can derive only one conclusion and it is that "Just as things and happenings are dependent on a cause to come into being, in the same way a cause is needed for their continued existence whether the cause of continuance is the same as the cause of its creation or something else. If anyone denies the necessity of a cause for continuance, he denies the principles of causation itself.

Now pay attention so that we can present the second part of the objection, which is a basic part of it (please note):

It is possible that some people say: We agree that every system is in need of a cause for its creation as well as its continuance but it is not necessary that the cause of creation is also the cause of continuance. What prevents the Creator from the aspect of this knowledge and Intention to devise a system by which the world of cause effect is dependent upon one another and each of them is merged to the other that they can themselves continue to exist. As mentioned in the example of the clock that a knowing person brings it into existence with the help of solid matter and even are his death the clock continues to exist. The result is that the existing world was in need of a Creator to bring it into existence but for its continuity of existence it is subservient to a natural cause and a decreed movement.

If the question is presented in this form the reply has to be given in this way (please note):

When it is kept in mind that time is on the fourth stage of distance that is a natural existence passes a new stage of its existence in every passing moment. That is, every moment is a different existence from the previous and the later moment and according to another comparison the universe is a compound of “incidents” and “possibilities” so in these circumstances, thus in every movement a natural existence and the continuity of its special ones require a cause. An existence of such a cause which is eternal. And not a cause which itself is dependent on another cause.

Please allow us to explain this with the help of an example: Let us see an electric bulb. This bulb is in need of electric powerhouse for its illumination, now was this cause necessary for it only in the initial period? Certainly not!

If for a period of time—however less it may be— the connection of the bulb with the powerhouse is interrupted, it will go off and with this, its light and all the effects of its movement will come to an end. It is possible that the bulb is obtaining its necessary power from the wires, but it is obvious that wires themselves do not possess electricity and they also receive this power from the electric powerhouse.

On the basis of this it is said that all the existing things or incidents and effects are in need of such a real initiator on which they could depend every moment so that this universe can continue to exist because we know that all the things in the universe, their effects and their attributes have not come into being from inside themselves.

All these are happenings (that is they are brought into being) and before this they were non-existent. The system of this universe depends on natural causes but it is absolutely necessary that these natural causes depend upon an eternal cause. That is, it is necessary that the luminosity of existence should continue to reach them every moment from that eternal life source and if for a moment this connection is broken they will become non-existence.

That is what we are saying:

The Almighty is every moment and in every place with all the things. So much so that all the existing things of the universe cannot exist without Him even for a moment. The world of existence is not an eternal and everlasting world, it is a created world which is having relation with an eternal and everlasting cause and this relationship is a part of the existence of this universe like the connection of a bulb with the powerhouse.

A great misunderstanding regarding the making of the clock is that the clock maker has certainly not created the material with which he has constructed the clock. He has just shaped the material and joined together the different parts. But if he had created the actual material of the clock, and if he had brought it from non-existence into existence, then in the event of his death the material would have also have become non-existent.

In the same way the builder is not creator of building material. He just gives it a shape and if he has brought the material from non–existence into existence, that is the material had relations with the builder while it came into existence, it would have come to an end with the death of builder.

If we desire to mention this in philosophical style we shall say the world is Mumkinul Wujood (Liable to exist) and not wajibul Wujood (self–existent). On the basis of this the Mumkinul Wujood is in need of wajibul wujood for its creation and its continued existence and if it becomes needless of everything for its continued existence, it should be wajibul wujood while this is impossible for a Mumkinul wujood to change into wajibul wujood.¹

1. For more details refer to Rationality of Islam, by Ayatullah Behishti and Hujjatul Islam Bahonar. Published by the Islamic Seminary Karachi.

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