

3.5 SOME OF WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ALLAH, THE SUBLIME AND MAJESTIC

We say *some* of what is impossible because there is no end to the things that are impossible for Him. Negating any perfection from Him implies imperfection, and it is a must that Allah is declared exaltedly transcendent above that. Any imperfection the mind can envision is impossible for Allah. It is obligatory upon us to negate those things in a general sense [not specifically], and it is only obligatory upon us to know of twenty impossibilities, and they are the opposites⁷⁸ of the twenty necessary attributes. It is also obligatory upon us to know the twenty necessary attributes, for everything that negates them is impossible for Allah, the Exalted.

3.5.1 NON-EXISTENCE [‘ADAM]

This is the opposite of existence and is an expression that denotes nothingness. Existence is necessary for Allah and non-existence is impossible for Him.

3.5.2 CONTINGENCY [HUDŪTH]

This is the opposite of pre-eternality. Pre-eternality is necessary for Allah and contingency is impossible for Him. What is meant here by contingency is coming into being after non-existence.

disbelief results from this difference. The consensus is with regards to the disbelief of the one who denies the predicative attributes—not the qualitative attributes. (F)

⁷⁸ Linguistically, an opposite is something contrary to something else, be it an existent or non-existent thing. In the technical sense of the word, it is defined as an actual thing that stands opposite of another actual thing. And although it is not possible for the two to come together, it is possible for both to be raised from something. An example of this is blackness and whiteness. Both are existing things and contrary to each other and neither can be together in one locus. It is possible, however, for both to be raised from one locus, such as an object being red and neither white nor black. What is meant here by opposite is its linguistic meaning. (M)

Everything that was non-existent and then came into existence is considered contingent.⁷⁹

3.5.3 HAVING AN END

This is the opposite of endlessness. Endlessness is necessary for Allah and having an end is impossible for Him. What is meant here by having an end is coming to an end after having previously existed.

3.5.4 HAVING LIKENESS TO CONTINGENCIES⁸⁰

⁷⁹ The relation of opposition between contingency and pre-eternality is opposition between something and that which stands contradictory of it on the same level [*naqīd*], because [in reality,] the contradictory of pre-eternality is *non pre-eternality*, which is contingency in and of itself, and that is because there is no intermediary [term] between [contingency and non pre-eternality]. This is if contingency is explained according to its metaphorical meaning which is “renewal after non-existence.” On the other hand, if we were to explain it according to its literal meaning—which is existence after non-existence—the relation of opposition would be between something and what is more particular than its contradictory, because the contradictory of pre-eternality is non pre-eternality, and this is inclusive of contingency according to the meaning given here as well as renewal after non-existence. Based upon this, contingency is more particular than non-pre-eternality, which is the contradictory of pre-eternality. (B)

⁸⁰ “Contingencies” is the plural of contingency. A contingency is that which came into existence after non-existence. This applies to everything besides Allah, the Exalted. Allah was, and there was nothing along with Him. Everything other than Allah is called a world [*‘alam*] and it is two categories: substances and accidents.

A substance is that which subsists within itself and is not in need of another substance in which to subsist. Such substances include the bodies of animals, stones, trees, and so on. All of these things subsist within themselves. From among the qualities of substances is spatial contact, which is for something to take up an empty space the size of its substance. Every substance takes up a space the size of its body, taking from the space that is between the heavens and the earth. A tall substance, for instance, will take up space according to its length; a short substance will take up space according to shortness, and so on.

This is the opposite of the necessary dissimilarity that Allah must have [from contingent things]. Likeness is impossible for Him, and it is an expression denoting resemblance between [His] Entity, attributes, and action and those of contingent beings.⁸¹

Hence, it is impossible for Allah's Divine Entity to take up space, to be a physical mass, to be an accident that subsists within a body, to be in a direction with respect to a body, such as Him being above the Throne, or being below it, or to its left, to its right, in front of it, or behind it. If Allah was in a direction with respect to a physical mass He would also be a physical mass. If He was a physical mass He would not possess dissimilarity [from the creation], and negating His absolute dissimilarity is impossible. These are some of the examples of likeness that are impossible with regards to the Divine Entity, and they are examples that follow corporeality.⁸²

An accident is that which does not subsist within itself; rather, it needs an entity in which to subsist, such as the colour black, or white, or any other colour, and movement and stillness. The colour black, for example, does not exist on its own without an entity in which to subsist. Nay, it has no reality unless it subsists within an entity, such as in a black garment or a black stick and so on. The world is restricted to these two categories, and it is impossible for Allah to have a likeness to any of this. He is neither a substance nor an accident. (F)

⁸¹ You should know that there are ten types of likeness:

1. That He is a body
2. That He is an accident subsisting within a body
3. That He is in a direction
4. That He has a direction unto Himself
5. That He indwells in a place
6. That He is subject to the passing of time
7. That contingencies subsist within Him
8. That He is qualified with smallness
9. That He is qualified with largeness
10. That He is described with motives in His actions and rulings.

These ten things are mentioned here in this order. (F)

⁸² Allah is not to the right of the Throne, nor is He to the left of it, in front of it, behind it, above it, or under it. One must beware of what the laity believes, namely, that Allah is [physically] above the world. That said, the correct view regarding one who believes in a direction

It is impossible for Allah to have a direction in Himself, in that He has a right, left, above, below, front, or back. If He possessed such directions He would be a physical mass, and this is another example of likeness that is impossible with regards to the Divine Entity. This is an example that also follows from corporeality.⁸³

NOTICE

You should know that a substance [*jirm*] is more specific [in its indication] than an essence. An essence is more general.

[for Allah] is that he has *not* disbelieved. This was stated by [al-'Izz] Ibn 'Abd al-Salām. Al-Nawawī restricted this ruling with the condition that such a person [who believes that] be from the laity. (B)

In *al-Qawā'id al-Kubrā*, al-'Izz said: "...especially the view of the one who believes in a direction [for Allah]; customarily no one is inherently guided to belief in an existing being that is neither moving nor still, and neither separate from the world nor connected to it, and neither inside of the world nor outside of it, No one is guided to that save by examining difficult, recondite proofs, which is why Allah has pardoned the laity regarding that."

It seems apparent that the restriction of this coming from the laity is from al-'Izz and that al-Nawawī only followed him in that. (F)

⁸³ The anthropomorphists among the Ḥanbalīs and those who followed them among the followers of Ibn Taymiyya all affirm two hands for Allah, the Exalted, and say that their meaning with respect to Allah is the same meaning as hands are with respect to the creation. They do not explicitly use the word "physical limb" or "part" because there is no mention of that [in the Divine texts] and for fear that some might imagine that it is possible for them [hands] to be separated from Allah's Entity. Far exalted is Allah above their vain desires. They claim that each hand has its own direction; and for certain, the only reason they say this is because they believe that the two hands are parts and appendages—even though they prohibit using the word "part" or "limb."

According to *Ahl al-Sunna*, this belief is false and it is not allowed to be affirmed for Allah, the Exalted. I once debated someone from their ilk who had taken the position of a Shaykh. He explicitly declared that Allah possesses a "portion" [*qadr*] and that according to him "portion" means size and limit. On the other hand, he refused to describe Allah using the word "size" because it is not a beautiful word, so with these types of people verbal expressions are paramount and not meanings, so contemplate this well and marvel! (F)