

## **What Is the Concept of Infinity? Is Human an Infinity-Seeking Being?**

### **What Does the Concept of Infinity and Limitlessness Mean?**

In dictionaries, the word 'infinity' is synonymous with words like endlessness, boundlessness, eternity, perpetuity, and limitlessness, each of which has its own usage depending on the context of speech. In spoken language, we mostly use the word 'infinity' (also infinite and infinitely) to emphasize the greatness of something; for example, we say, "He is infinitely rich," or "I love you infinitely." However, in most cases, we do not know the exact greatness of the thing in question. We only know that it is very great in size or importance, and for this reason, we do not regard any limits for it. But is it really correct to use the word "infinity" in that context?

Despite the concept of infinity having existed for over two thousand years, it has always been a vague and sometimes challenging concept for mathematicians, physicists, and philosophers. However, what exactly is the concept of infinity? Does an infinite being really exist, or is it just part of our imagination?

The concept of infinity is derived from the Latin word 'finites,' meaning limited. Now infinite refers to something that is not limited and has no spatial or temporal restrictions. In mathematics, this term is synonymous with limitlessness and is usually indicated by " $\infty$ " as the infinity symbol. It is used to show anything "beyond any quantity." From a mathematical standpoint, there is still no precise explanation or interpretation for infinity; in other words, a specific number cannot be assigned to it. No matter which number you choose, you can always identify a larger number. However, it should be noted that infinity as a number is too large to be specified,

and as a result, we have no choice but to use this term to express it. When children become familiar with numbers, they are often curious about what the largest number is. Typically, they stop at the largest number they know, such as hundred, thousand, or million. However, many of them quickly realize that there is no number greater than the others because by adding one to any number, we will have a number greater than the previous one.

The concept of infinity in physics does not have a precise definition and has different meanings in various contexts; for example, consider two irons with different temperature levels. The distance at which we no longer feel the heat of the iron is different for these two ones; in other words, the concept of infinity is different for these two irons.

As you can see, the concept of infinity in physics expresses a different meaning compared to mathematics. The meaning of the word “infinity” in physics is undefined or unclear, but in mathematics, when infinity is used, it refers to a very large number that we cannot measure. Furthermore, our understanding of infinity in mathematics and physics differs from its interpretations in the realms of life, the universe, or love.

For most people, the concept of infinity is easily understandable, but its ‘greatness’ or ‘endlessness’ cannot be expressed. The concept of infinity when applied to things like love is something intangible, and each person has his own understanding of it. Regarding all these, is it possible to conceive a correct understanding of the word infinity in our minds?

In this article, first , we are going to discuss the human desire for infinity, and then we will demonstrate that infinity in Islamic philosophy is not used as a symbolic or

conventional concept as used in in mathematics or other fields of knowledge; rather, it is an existence with a specific definition and indescribable greatness.

### **The Human Is Innately an Infinity-Seeking Being**

We all know that human desires are endless; whatever is given to us, we still want something more and better. Sometimes, we go to any lengths to attain our desired goal. However, when we achieve it, we realize that we desire more than that, and what we have gained is not exactly what we sought. We seek infinity in everything we pursue, no matter what it is. For example, a wealthy person always seeks more wealth, never considering it enough. Similarly, a person in power is always in pursuit of greater power; even if he were to conquer the moon in addition to the whole earth, it would be still insufficient for him, and he would be greedy to dominate other planets as well.

In other words, our desires and wishes have no end; we are inherently in love with infinity. That is, all transient and limited matters cannot fulfil our desire for infinity. We hate weakness, incapability, limitations, and negative responses, and we desire everything in its infinite form, whether be it power, wealth, life, comfort, knowledge, beauty, etc. For instance, if we desire money, it is because we perceive money as a source of power and want to alleviate our weaknesses and deprivations with it. Human infinite desires and constant struggle against limitations have been the main causes of many wars and conflicts. No one on this earth can be satisfied with the limitedness of this world. The fact that the human is an infinity-seeking being does not need proof; each of us experiences this truth within ourselves.

Now that we are somehow familiar with the concept of infinity, and we know that our innate nature is designed to desire all perfections such as wealth, beauty, power, knowledge, and eternal life infinitely and all at once, the question arises: Is it possible to acquire all perfections all at once and infinitely? In other words, can we reach infinity? To answer this question, first we need to know what desire and its related principles are.

### **Five Principles of Desiring**

Desire is not an imaginary matter, but an undeniable reality. Our desires and wishes are entangled with the concept of infinity. You cannot find any person on earth who does not have a desire, beloved, or wish. If we were asked about our beloved or desire, indeed we would name inanimate, vegetative, animal, intellective, or supra-rational perfections.

All of us, without exception, are in love with absolute perfection, and no one can deny that he seeks absolute perfection and he is not satisfied with limitations.

Whatever we desire follows these general principles:

- The desire for anything means that thing exists because naturally something that does not exist is not desired, and the desire for non-existent things is impossible. If we have thirst and desire water, it indicates that something called water exists in the natural world to quench our thirst.
- The desire for anything indicates compatibility with that thing; for example, our eyes are structured in such a way that they are in harmony and compatible with light, and as a result, the eyes need light to see.

- The desire for anything indicates a kind of awareness and knowledge about it. We cannot desire something unknown and unfamiliar to us; for example, we never desire fruits that we have never seen or heard about.
- The desire for anything indicates previous experience of it; tasting a certain fruit makes us want to eat it again in the future, but we never desire fruits that we have never tasted before.
- The desire for anything indicates lacking it and having the capacity to acquire it. We never desire something that we already possess; for example, a literate person no longer seeks to learn the alphabet, or a person who has just eaten and is full does not desire food because he has no more capacity for it.

### **The Characteristics of the Infinite Being**

Given the principles of desire and knowing that humans are infinity-seeking beings, it can be concluded that the infinite and absolute being, that embodies the concept of infinity and is the beloved of all humans, has the following characteristics:

- It definitely exists.
- We know it.
- We are compatible with it.
- We have experienced it before.
- And we have the capacity to use it.

According to what we stated, we conclude that the infinite being that is desirable for humans exists in reality. The human is a being that has been infinite before and

has experienced infinity. But now he is temporarily living in the boundaries of this world, and after traversing the intended path, he will return to his original position. Surely someone who has experienced infinity before cannot cope with the limitations of the material world. All of us have the potential and capacity to infinitely acquire perfections. Now we are going to know more about the inherent characteristics of this infinite being.

### **There Is Only One Infinite Being**

According to the rational and mathematical principles, there cannot be more than one infinite being. If we imagine two infinite beings at the same time, with the existence of the second one, we have to establish some limits and boundaries for the first one, while this is not compatible with the concept of infinity. Therefore, we cannot attribute infinity to each perfection individually; for example, we cannot say infinite knowledge, infinite power, or infinite beauty because infinity is limitless. Infinity means something without limits or boundaries. No science or law can prove the existence of two infinite beings because such an assumption is wrong, and the presence of a second infinite being would end the infinity of the first infinite being. In other words, when two infinite beings exist, the vacuum between them is either non-existence or existence. In previous lessons, we proved that non-existence does not exist; therefore, when considering the existence of two infinite beings, we will have a total of three infinite existences. Now, again, the vacuum between these three existences is either non-existence or existence. Since non-existence does not exist, this creates five existences, and this chain continues with no ending.

Knowing the infinite being is possible only through an intuitive, inward, and epistemic journey. The infinite existence cannot be divided into several parts, but different manifestations of the same being may exist in various forms; for example, a human and a table are different manifestations of existence. When a person sits behind a table, another manifestation of existence, called air, exists between them. In this example, existence is unified and only appears in different forms as the human, table, and air. Therefore, the infinite being desired by all humans has all perfections in an absolute form and all at once, and no perfection exists out of it. In other words, the infinite being has no parts; rather, it is one absolute being.

### **The Infinite Being Is Pre-Eternal<sup>1</sup> and Eternal<sup>2</sup>**

If we say that the infinite being has come into existence at a specific time or place and exists until a known time or place, we have limited it, and this is not compatible with the concept of infinity. Infinity cannot be limited because in that case, something outside of it must limit it. It means non-existence must limit the infinite being with its presence. As we mentioned, non-existence is a conventional matter and does not exist; therefore, there is nothing that can limit the infinite being. Infinity has no beginning or end; it is pre-eternal and eternal.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Azali*

<sup>2</sup>. *Abadi*

## **The Infinite Being Is the Origin of the Realm of Existence**

The infinite being is a unified whole and indivisible existence that has all perfections together; therefore, it does not receive any perfection from outside of itself because it already has all of them. It is impossible for the infinite being to need anything because in that case, the thing needed is either the infinite being itself, or something other than itself. If it is itself, then the need for itself would be nonsense, and if it needs something other than itself, it contradicts its infinity. Therefore, there is nothing in the realm of existence except the limitless infinite being, and whatever exists comes from this being.

### **What Is the Infinite Being Called?**

Based on what has been stated above, examining the attributes of our own existence, we realized the existence of an infinite and limitless being, which is the origin of all perfections and the source of all desires. The existence of this being is undeniable because not only do we intuitively perceive its existence within ourselves, but we also desire and love it. This infinite being has different names and manifestations based on various conventions:

- Since it is an absolute truth and we cannot comprehend it completely, it is called *Huwa* (He).
- Since it possesses all perfections, it is called Allah.
- Since we all love and desire its perfections, it is called *Ilah* (deity).
- Since it is only One, it is called *Ahad* (the One).



- Since it is absolutely perfect and nothing exists outside of it which could be desirable to it, and there is nothing but itself, it is called “*Samad* (Absolutely Self-Sufficient).”
- Since it is an infinite being, there is no time that it had not been existing, it has no reproductive relationship with any other being, and all beings are entirely its own manifestations, it is called “*Lam yalid* (Nothing goes outside of Him).”
- Since this infinite being is pre-eternal, and has not come from anywhere, and no one has brought it into existence, it is called “*Walam yulad* (He has not been emanated from anything).”
- Since this infinite being is one and unified, and its creations are its own manifestations and cannot be compared to it, it is called “*Walam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad* (and none is like Him).”

In this way, by examining the concept of infinity, we have extracted all the verses of Surah *Tawhid* (Quran, 112) from our own souls. Now it is proved that the infinite being that is desired and loved by us is the one and limitless essence of Allah; therefore, we can conclude that we are also infinite beings because we desire infinity. A limited being cannot desire infinity, and indeed to desire infinity, one must have a limitless capacity to receive it.

Now you may ask that if “Allah” is the Infinite Being and the Absolute Existence, then what are we and other phenomena in the world? Certainly, it is logically impossible to say we and other beings in the world are some beings apart from Him because, as we mentioned, there cannot be two infinite beings. On the other hand, if we are the infinite being, it means we are the absolute perfect being, and this is

impossible because in that case, the concepts of desire and aspiration would lose their significance for us.

Therefore, we and whatever we see in the world are manifestations of His essence, and we do not have an independent existence. All humans, whether they know it or not, love and desire Allah because they love infinity and absolute perfection. Allah is present everywhere with all His essence. The Infinite Being is present everywhere and in everything with all His names and attributes.

In this article, we discussed the concept of infinity and the existence of the true Infinite Being. We stated that unlike various fields of knowledge that consider and use the concept of infinity merely as a convention, in Islamic philosophy, the infinite being means everything, and nothing exists outside of Him. All of us inherently seek infinity and desire to achieve absolute perfection, and this Infinite Existence is the one and the absolute essence of Allah.

We welcome your comments and questions regarding this article. Feel free to share your thoughts and queries with us.