

Role of the Primacy of Heaven in Understanding the Hell's Nature and Status

The Primacy of Heaven — Why Heaven Takes Precedence Over Hell in the System of Creation

In exploring the structure of the universe and the system of creation, one of the fundamental questions that arises is the relationship between Heaven and Hell. At this point, the question is whether these two realities hold equal existential primacy, or whether one precedes the other. This article, centered on the concept of the primacy of Heaven, examines why Heaven holds precedence over Hell. Drawing on philosophical analysis and religious sources, Heaven can be considered an ideal living condition, harmonious with the existential structure of human beings, while Hell is the result of incompatibility with these conditions. From this perspective, Hell is not an independent reality but rather a secondary and derivative state, contingent upon the prior existence of Heaven. Just as the concept of illness would be meaningless without the prior concept of health, so too is Hell inconceivable without the existence of Heaven. But before delving deeper into this discussion, let us return to the beginning—the origin of the story of creation.

What was the first thing God created? How did the realm of creation come into existence? Were Paradise and Hell created before the creation of human beings? To answer these questions, we turn to the words of God in the Noble Quran. In verses 1 to 3 of *Surah Ar-Rahman*, God states: “[The] Most Gracious [God], taught the Quran [to His Messenger and his family (Peace be upon them)], [and then] created man.” From these three verses, it becomes evident that the very first thing God

created was the Quran. After that, He created the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them), because the second verse says “taught the Quran”—which necessarily implies the existence of a being or beings to whom God taught the Quran. And it is clear that this being is not the general human being, since the creation of man is explicitly mentioned in the third verse.

Now, we return to our earlier question: when were Heaven and Hell created? How can the primacy of Heaven and Hell be evaluated? In this study, by drawing on concrete examples and rational arguments, we aim to substantiate the hypothesis that Heaven possesses existential primacy, and that Hell derives its meaning only in relation to it.

Examining Two Perspectives on the Time of Creation of Heaven and Hell

Understanding when Heaven and Hell came into being depends largely on one's religious and philosophical perspective. Broadly speaking, there are two major viewpoints on this matter that are worth examining.

Existential Perspective: According to the existential perspective, Paradise and Hell have existed as two dimensions from the very beginning of creation. Those who hold this view do not affirm the primacy of Paradise and believe that both are predetermined realms into which human beings will enter after death.

Processual Perspective: The processual perspective holds that Heaven and Hell are the outcomes of our deeds and choices in this worldly life. In this view, the nature of our existence in the hereafter— whether we go to heaven or Hell —is determined by how we have lived in this world. According to this outlook, Hell

arises as a result of the soul's inability to conform to the new existential condition—namely, Heaven.

Both the existential and processual perspectives offer compelling and reflective approaches to the question of when Heaven and Hell were created. The existential view, by emphasizing the eternal and everlasting nature of these two abodes, maintains that Heaven and Hell are independent, fixed realities established from the outset. This perspective is, to some extent, grounded in a form of spiritual determinism, as it views human destiny within a preordained framework. In contrast, the processual viewpoint emphasizes the way human beings live and act, asserting that Heaven and Hell are outcomes of our deeds and choices in this world. This view regards the human being as a free and morally responsible being and highlights the individual's role in determining their fate after death.

What is particularly interesting is that the processual perspective is closely connected to the concept of the primacy of Heaven, maintaining that Heaven exists as the original and default reality, while Hell arises as a consequence of failing to align with it. As a result, this view not only affirms the primacy of Heaven but also sees Hell as a reactive and dependent state.

The existential view, however—unlike the processual view—does not attribute such primacy to Heaven and instead considers both Heaven and Hell to be independent and self-standing realities. This divergence reveals that within the processual perspective, Heaven holds a central and foundational status. It is conceived as the embodiment of perfection, with Hell deriving meaning solely through incompatibility with it. In other words, even if Heaven and Hell were

created simultaneously, Heaven would still function as the essential criterion and the true source of value.

In what follows, in order to examine the belief in the primacy of Heaven more precisely, we will explore the nature of Heaven and Hell.

What is Heaven? What is Hell?

Sooner or later, we will exit the womb of this world and be born into the Hereafter — into eternity. The conditions of life in the Hereafter differ vastly from those of our worldly existence. If, upon entering that new realm, we are not compatible with its conditions, we will experience suffering and torment. Imagine an exquisite and luxurious restaurant, filled with flavorful, diverse, and delightful dishes. Guests can enjoy the taste and quality of the food simply by being present. Now, suppose someone — due to an illness such as the loss of taste receptors or a digestive disorder — is unable to taste or properly digest the food. For such a person, these extraordinary dishes will not only be unenjoyable, but consuming them will be accompanied by pain, nausea, or discomfort. In such a case, one cannot blame the food or the restaurant. The problem lies in the person's physical condition — in their state of health.

Previously, in the article "What is Hell?", we stated that Hell is the state of incompatibility with the existential conditions of the Hereafter. To explain this definition, we drew upon the law of proportion, the analogy between the relationship of the mother's womb to this world, and likewise, the relationship of this world to the Hereafter. We explained that if a fetus, during its time in the mother's womb, develops a sound body suited to the conditions of worldly life, it

will experience a healthy birth or a robustly healthy birth. In such a case, the newborn will be able to benefit from the innumerable and freely available blessings of this world. For instance, it brings with itself healthy eyes which—by virtue of their compatibility with the wavelengths present in the world—enable it to witness the infinite beauties of the world.

But what is Hell, and how is it related to Heaven? If that same fetus, during its time in the womb, suffers from arrested development or illness—for instance, if it is born with a weak respiratory system—it will, upon birth, immediately be subject to the criteria of this world, and its incompatibility with worldly life will be instantly recognized. This incompatibility marks the beginning of hardship and suffering during the course of treatment. We refer to such a condition as Hell. In fact, any deprivation from or inability to benefit from the world's provisions stems from the limitations and disharmonies that the fetus has cultivated within itself. Therefore, Hell, for the fetus, is the result of its failure to align with the living conditions of the world—which, in this analogy, represents Heaven. Thus, Hell is not a physical location or a place parallel to Heaven; rather, it is a spiritual and existential state that arises from the inability to adapt to the ideal conditions of the Hereafter—Heaven. From this definition, one can understand that the primacy of Heaven is a genuine truth.

Why Does Hell Lack Primacy?

Perhaps, to affirm the primacy of Heaven, it is helpful to examine the reasons for denying the primacy of Hell. Imagine we take health as a representation of Heaven. Health is a state in which the body functions properly, we feel calm and refreshed,

and we derive enjoyment from life. Now, consider illness. What is illness? Does it have an independent and separate existence apart from health? In truth, illness is a deviation from the state of health—a collection of symptoms, signs, and irregularities that indicate the body has departed from its normal and wholesome condition. Illness only makes sense when there is an existing state of health from which the body has deviated. Therefore, if health did not exist, illness would be meaningless. We would not be able to say something is “ill,” because there would be no standard state with which to compare it.

From this example, we can conclude that Hell, as a concept, depends on the existence of Heaven, thereby affirming the primacy of Heaven. In other words, since Hell is defined as “incompatibility with the conditions of the Heaven,” if those heavenly conditions did not exist, the concept of Hell would also cease to exist—much like how illness depends on the existence of health.

Hell is primarily understood as the result of a process or a state, rather than an independent place or entity. In fact, Hell is not inherently an independent place or state created in opposition to Heaven; rather, it is the consequence of an individual’s condition and their failure to adapt to the ideal existential framework of the Hereafter (Heaven). If this afflicted individual restores their health (rectifies the structure of their soul and being), they can then easily partake in and enjoy the ideal conditions, just like everyone else.

The Time of Creation of Heaven

Now, we can more easily address the question of when Heaven and Hell were created, or which one holds primacy over the other. Based on the facts we have presented regarding the primacy of Heaven, and noting that Hell does not possess an identity equal to Heaven but is rather the result of incompatibility with it, we must conclude that Heaven was created before the world. To illustrate this fact, consider the Milad Tower in Tehran. This tower is a symbol of progress and technology in the city and was fundamentally constructed to fulfill Tehran's communication and tourism needs. Can we say that Milad Tower was built before the city of Tehran itself? Certainly not! The existence and function of Milad Tower are entirely dependent on the city, and without Tehran, the tower would not only be useless but would essentially have no meaning at all. The same principle applies to the example of the fetus and the mother's womb. The mother's womb is a safe and temporary environment for the fetus to grow, but can the womb exist independently from the world? The womb is part of the mother's body, and the mother's body is part of the material world, deriving its life from it. Compared to the vastness of the world, the womb is a limited and temporary environment. Just as the world surrounds the mother's womb and sustains it, and just as the city of Tehran is a prerequisite for the existence of Milad Tower, Paradise also encompasses the world, and its primacy precedes it. Despite all its grandeur, the world is like a womb within the greater reality of Heaven. Therefore, according to the viewpoint of Paradise's primacy, it can be concluded that Heaven's creation precedes the world's, and Hell, in relation to this primacy, is merely a secondary condition resulting from incompatibility with Heaven's ideal state. This perspective not only positions Heaven as the ultimate purpose of creation but also intensifies human responsibility to align with this perfect order and attain eternal Heaven.