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What is the nature of this creation?

<sup>1)</sup> Know that this whole of being is one individual and nothing else... a single being which has the same status as Zayid or Omar... (1:72, 184)

<sup>2)</sup> [J]ust as a living being lives as a whole in virtue of the motion of its heart, even if there subsist in it parts of the body that are at rest and not sentient... so is this whole being one individual that lives in virtue of the movement of heaven... Accordingly [you should] represent to yourself... the whole of this sphere as one living individual in motion and possessing a soul... By means of this representation it will also be made clear that the One has created one being. (1:72, 187; see also 2:1, 251)

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What is the highest value and purpose of creation?

³⁾ [A]ll the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else... If you consider the Torah, the notion that we have in view will become manifest... For with reference to none of the things created is the statement made in any way that it exists for the sake of some other things. [It] only says that the One brought every part of the world into existence and that it conformed to its purpose. This is the meaning of the saying: "And God saw that it was good." About the whole, it says, "And God saw everything that [God] had made, and, behold, it [is] very good." [Gn 1:31] (3:13, 452-3)

⁴⁾ [A]ll the existent individuals of the human species, and all the more so the other species, are things of no value at all in comparison with the whole [of Creation] that exists and endures. (3:12, 442)

⁵⁾ [T]he entire purpose [of creation] consists in bringing into existence the way you see it everything whose existence is possible... (3:25, 504; cf. 506)

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What should we believe about ourselves?

<sup>6)</sup> Many are perplexed/*n'vukhim*... over the final end of existence... It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of humanity. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else. Thus even according to our view holding that the world has been produced in time, the quest for the final end of all the species of beings collapses. (3:13, 449, 452)

<sup>7)</sup> Know that the majority of the imaginings that call forth perplexity/*m'vukhah* in the quest for the purpose of existence of the world... have as their root humankind's error about itself, imagining that all that exists exists because of themselves alone. (3:25, 505-6; cf. 3:12, 442)

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How do we know God, and what do we know of God?

⁸⁾ [T]here exists nothing except God and this existent world, and... there is no possible inference proving [God's] existence... except those deriving from this existent taken as a whole and from its details. (1:71, 183, cf. 1:72, 187, above – "the One has created one being")

⁹⁾ When [Moses] asked for knowledge of the attributes... he was told: "I will make all My goodness / *kol tuvi* pass before you" [Ex 33:19]... "All My goodness" alludes to the display to him of all existing [creatures] of which it is said: "And God saw everything that [God] had made, and behold, it [is] very good/ *tov m'od*." [Gn 1:31] By their display, I mean that [Moses] would apprehend their nature and *the way they are mutually connected* so that he would know how [God] governs them in general and in detail. (1:54, 124)

¹⁰⁾ [E]very benefit that comes from [God] is called loving-kindness/*chesed*... Hence this reality as a whole – I mean that [which God] has brought into being, may the One be exalted – is *chesed*. Thus it says: "The world is built of lovingkindness." [Ps 89:3] (3:53, 631)

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What makes a human being human?

<sup>11)</sup> Similarly [to the stars, which give light by their nature] it says of *adam*, "And have dominion over the fish of the sea", and so on, which does not mean that humanity was created for the sake of this, but merely gives information about the nature with which the One has stamped humanity. (3:13, 454)

<sup>12)</sup> [T]he human perfection / *sh'leymut ha'adam* in which a person can truly glory her or himself [is when] one reaches apprehension of God according to their capacity, and knows God's providence over God's creations, how it [operates] in their coming into being and in their being governed. The way of such a person, after such apprehension, will be directed continually toward lovingkindness, righteousness, and justice, to make herself alike/*hitdamut* to [God's] actions. (3:54, 638; cf. 3:27, 511)

<sup>13)</sup> [W]hoever has not attained this form (i.e., apprehension, called "God's image")... is not human, but an animal having the shape and configuration of a human being. Such a being, however, has the ability to cause various kinds of harm and to produce evils that *the other animals* do not have. For it uses the capacities for thought and perception to all kinds of machinations entailing evils... and engendering all kinds of harm. (1:7, 33)

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On the common nature of humanity and "the other animals"

¹⁴⁾ It is forbidden to slaughter [an animal] and its young on the same day, this being a precautionary measure to avoid slaughtering the young animal in front of its mother. For in these cases animals feel very great pain, there being no difference regarding this pain between humanity and *the other animals*. For the love and the tenderness of a mother for her child is not consequent upon reason, but upon the activity of the imaginative faculty, which is found in most animals just as it is found in humanity. (3:48, 599; cf. 1:75, 209; 2:1, 245).

The Guide throughout counters Saadyah Gaon, who writes in *Emunot v'Dei'ot*, art.4: "When we see the many created beings, we should not be perplexed/*n'vukhim* about what among them is the goal... for the goal is humanity."