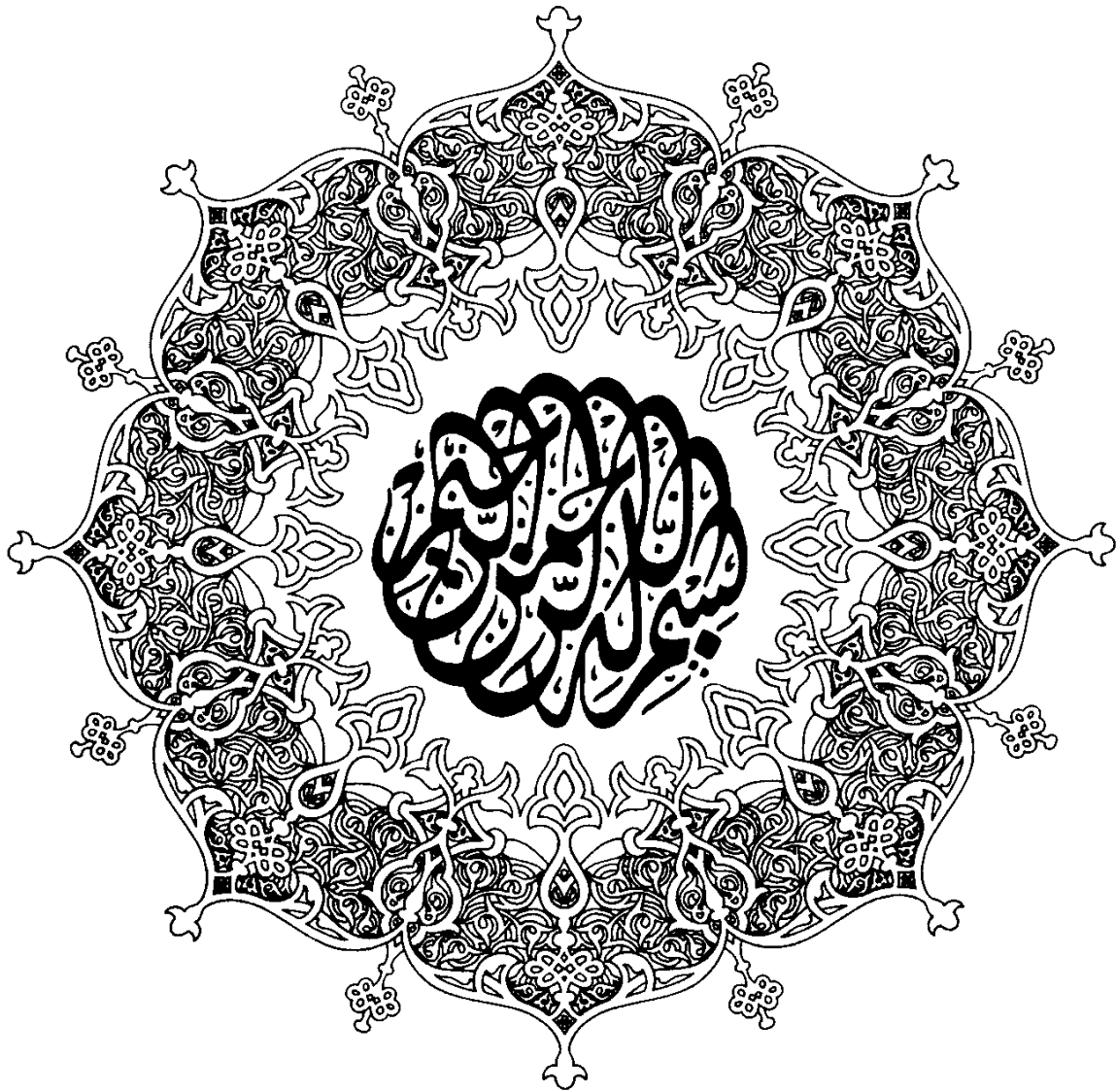


Response to Atheism

(Collection of Articles)



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Quranic Argument for God’s Existance	5
Did the universe begin to exist?.....	6
1. The second law of thermodynamics	6
2. The absurdity of an infinite history of past events	7
3. Astrophysical evidence.....	9
Created or brought into being from nothing	11
Self caused or self created	12
Created or brought into being by something else that began to exist	13
Created or brought into being by a non-created or un-caused entity	14
Quantum Physics Undermines the Argument	16
References	18
A Muslim’s response to “The God Delusion”	20
Responding to what Dawkins considers his central argument.....	20
God almost certainly does not exist.	21
Explaining Premise One	22
Why it cannot be Physical Necessity.....	23
Why it cannot be Chance	24
A Note on Rejecting the Supernatural	26
Responding to what Philosophers consider his best argument.....	29
Explaining the key premise	32
A Quick Note on Religious “Evils”	34
Conclusion.....	35
Bibliography	35
A Muslim’s Response to “Young Atheist’s Handbook”	37
Evidence of the Existence of God, and the Wisdom Behind His Creation	71
Question about existence of God	78

The Quranic Argument for God's Existence

Author: Hamza Tzortzis

“No question is more sublime than why there is a universe: why there is anything rather than nothing.”[1]

When we reflect upon our own existence we will come to the realisation, that at some point in time, we began to exist. Since we were once non-existent and are now in existence, it follows that we must have had a beginning. In light of this, the Qur'an raises some profound questions: were we created by nothing? Did we create ourselves? Or did we create the universe?

“Or were they created by nothing? Or were they the creators (of themselves)? Or did they create heavens and earth? Rather, they are not certain.” Quran 52:35-36

These questions can be addressed to the existence of everything temporal, in other words the entire universe. Therefore, the exegetical implications of these verses can be logically formulated in the following way:

Things that began to exist were either:-

1. Created or brought into being from nothing
2. Self caused or self created
3. Created or brought into being by something else that began to exist
4. Created or brought into being by a non-created or un-caused entity

Before we proceed, the first presupposition has to be substantiated, as it forms the basis for the Qur'an's argument for the existence of God. This first assumption is that the universe began to exist.

Did the universe begin to exist?

To substantiate the view that the universe began to exist we can bring into our discussion a plethora of philosophical and inductive arguments:

1. The second law of thermodynamics
2. The absurdity of an infinite history of past events
3. Astrophysical evidence

1. The second law of thermodynamics

The concept of entropy was introduced to explain the direction of various processes that occur in the natural world. Entropy is a measure of how evenly energy is distributed in a system. For example, heat always flows from a body of a higher temperature or energy (low entropy) to one of a lower temperature or energy (high entropy). Take the following illustration of a container with gas, when the partition is removed, the gas in one end of the container will spread to the whole of the container, going from a state of low entropy (higher temperature or energy) to high entropy (lower temperature or energy).

Hence, according to the second law of thermodynamics, processes in a closed system tend towards higher entropy, as their energy is being used.

Applying the second law of thermodynamics to the universe we will conclude that it must have begun to exist. Since the universe is a closed system, with enough time the universe will suffer a heat death or thermodynamic equilibrium. When systems are in thermodynamic equilibrium, they cannot transfer energy. This is because entropy can only increase over time. Therefore, as the universe continues to expand it will eventually become cold and dead. However this raises a question, if the universe never began to exist it would imply that the universe has existed for an infinite amount of time. If this is true then why isn't the universe already in a state of heat death? This strongly suggests that the universe must have had a beginning, because if it didn't it would imply that it has existed for an infinite amount of time, which would mean that it should already have suffered a heat death. Since it hasn't suffered a heat death, it strongly indicates that the universe is finite, meaning it began to exist.

2. The absurdity of an infinite history of past events

Some philosophers such as Bertrand Russell argued that the universe is eternal, meaning it has no beginning and it will never end. However if we think about this we will conclude that this position is irrational. If the universe never had a beginning it means there must be an infinite history of past events. Yet does an actual infinite exist in the real world? Is it possible?

The concept of the actual infinite cannot be exported into the real world, because it leads to contradictions and doesn't make sense. Let's take the following examples to illustrate this point:

1. Say you have an infinite number of balls, if I take 2 balls away, how many do you have left? Infinity. Does that make sense? Well, there should be two less than infinity, and if there is, then we should be able to count how many balls you have. But this is impossible, because the infinite is just an idea and doesn't exist in the real world. In light of this fact the famous German mathematician David Hilbert said,

“The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought...the role that remains for the infinite to play is solely that of an idea.”[2]

2. Imagine you are a soldier ready to fire a gun, but before you shoot you have to ask permission for the soldier behind you, but he has to do the same, and it goes on for infinity. Will you ever shoot? No you wouldn't. This highlights, the absurdity of an infinite regress and this applies to events too. Therefore, there cannot be an infinite history of past events.

3. Take the distance between two points, one may argue that you can subdivide the distance into infinite parts, but you will always be subdividing and never actually reach the 'infinitieth' part! So in reality the infinite is potential and can never be actualised. Similarly the ancient Greek Philosopher Aristotle explained,

“...the infinite is potential, never actual: the number of parts that can be taken always surpasses any assigned number.”[3]

So if we refer back to an infinite history of past events we can conclude, since events are not just ideas they are real, the number of past events cannot be infinite.

Therefore the universe must be finite, in other words the cosmos had a beginning.

3. Astrophysical evidence

The 'Big Bang' is the prevailing theory in cosmology. It was first formulated by the aid of some observations made by an American Astronomer called Edwin Hubble. While Hubble was trying to understand the size of the universe, he observed immensely luminous stars called Cepheid Variables and noticed something peculiar. He observed that some of these stars were further away than initially anticipated, and that their colour was slightly changed, shifting towards red, something now known as red-shift. From Hubble's observations we were able to conclude that everything seems to be moving away from each other, in other words the universe is effectively expanding. As time moves on the universe continues to expand, but if time is reversed, the theory is that everything starts to coalesce and come together. Coupled with the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation, which is the radiation uniformly filling the observable universe, the idea of the 'Big Bang' was born. In other words the universe began at a cataclysmic event which created space-time and all matter in the universe. The physicist P. C. W. Davies explains,

"If we extrapolate this prediction to its extreme, we reach a point when all distances in the universe have shrunk to zero. An initial cosmological singularity therefore forms a past temporal extremity to the universe. We cannot continue physical reasoning, or even the concept of spacetime, through such an extremity. For this reason most cosmologists think of the initial singularity as the beginning of the universe. On this view the big bang represents the creation event; the creation not only of all the matter and energy in the universe, but also of spacetime itself." [4]

Although our understanding of what happened 10⁻⁴³ seconds after the 'Big Bang' is highly speculative, astrophysicists now concede little doubt that this universe in which we live is the aftermath of the emergence and expansion of space-time, which

occurred approximately 14 billion years ago. John Gribbin, an astrophysicist at Cambridge University, summarises the importance of 'Big Bang' cosmology,

"...the discovery of the century, in cosmology at least, was without doubt the dramatic discovery made by Hubble, and confirmed by Einstein's equations, that the Universe is not eternal, static, and unchanging." [5]

Thus the 'Big Bang' model describes our universe as having a beginning a finite time ago. As Alex Vilenkin, one of the world's leading theoretical cosmologists, writes,

"It is said that an argument is what convinces reasonable men and a proof is what it takes to convince even an unreasonable man. With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape, they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning." [6]

Other models have been proposed to try and explain away the obvious metaphysical questions that arise from a finite universe, for instance P.C.W. Davies questions,

"What caused the big bang? . . . One might consider some supernatural force, some agency beyond space and time as being responsible for the big bang, or one might prefer to regard the big bang as an event without a cause. It seems to me that we don't have too much choice. Either...something outside of the physical world...or...an event without a cause." [7]

These models include the oscillating and vacuum fluctuation models. These models however still have principles that necessitate a beginning to the universe, in other words they are non-infinitely extendable into the past. Take the oscillating model as an example, this model maintains that if the gravitational pull of the mass of the universe

was able to surmount the force of its expansion, then the expansion could be changed into a cosmic contraction or 'Big Crunch', and then into a new expansion, with the process continuing ad infinitum. However, there are a few issues with this model,

1. Firstly there is nothing available in modern physics that would allow a universe that is collapsing to spring back into a new expanding universe.
2. Secondly the mean mass density of the universe, derived from observational evidence, has shown that it is not enough to develop the required gravitational force to stop and reverse the expansion of the universe.
3. Thirdly, the second law of thermodynamics (as discussed above) implies the finitude of the universe. According to the oscillation model, the entropy is conserved from cycle to cycle of the various oscillations of expansion, crunch and expansion. This has the effect of generating larger and longer oscillations. Therefore the thermodynamic property of this model implies a beginning, as the universe that we exist in has not suffered a heat death, or thermodynamic equilibrium.

Since we have presented good evidence that the universe began to exist. We can now address the logically possible explanations the Qur'an presents as rationalisations of the origins of the universe.

Created or brought into being from nothing

We know the universe couldn't have come out of nothing, because out of nothing, nothing comes! This is an undeniable philosophical principle, as P. J. Zwart in his publication *About Time* explains,

“If there is anything we find inconceivable it is that something could arise from nothing.”[8]

A significant point to raise here is that nothingness should not be misconstrued as the nothingness that some physicists talk about. The term nothingness in this context refers to the absence of anything physical, in other words there is no pre-existing ‘stuff’. In light of the beginning of the universe, there was absolutely nothing before it began to exist, which is why physicists have explained the universe as having a space-time boundary.

However, nothingness as defined by some physicists relates to the quantum vacuum. This is misleading because the quantum is something. In quantum theory the vacuum is a field of energy pervading the whole of the universe. In the words of John Polkinghorne, a philosopher of science, the quantum vacuum,

“...is not ‘nothing’; it is a structured and highly active entity.”[9]

So, in context of some of the physicists’ definition, the universe could not have come from absolutely nothing, as the quantum vacuum is something. It is a sea of fluctuating energy, which is still part of the cosmos and it did not pre-exist the universe. This point leads us nicely to the next possible explanation.

Self caused or self created

Philosophically, the universe couldn’t have created itself because that would imply a paradox. It would mean that something can exist and not exist at the same time. The logical ends of this explanation are tantamount to saying that your mother gave birth to herself!

Recently, the world renowned physicist, Stephen Hawking in his new book *The Grand Design* argues that the universe did self create due to the law of gravity,

“Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing...”[10]

But his view on nothing, as previously mentioned, is not really nothingness but is space filled with the quantum vacuum, which is part of the universe. In essence Hawking is telling us that the universe can create itself, but it has to already exist for it to do that!

Concerning the law of gravity, well that is just a mathematical equation that describes nature. This law is part of the universe, which can also be described as a force of attraction between material objects. Therefore, how can this force exist before matter, in other words the universe?

To assert that the universe created itself would be absurd and self refuting, because in order for something to create itself it would need to exist before it existed!

Created or brought into being by something else that began to exist

This is not an adequate explanation for the origins of the universe. The universe could not have owed its existence to another state of temporal physical existence. To maintain such an explanation would be equivalent of expanding the boundaries of the universe, as all things which have a temporal beginning exist within the universe. Also, if temporal physical existence owes itself to another temporal physical existence ad infinitum, it doesn't explain anything. Rather it highlights the absurdity of an infinite regress, and that there has to be a beginning to the temporal physical states, which logically must be a non-physical state.

Take the following example into consideration. If the universe, U1, followed another temporal cause U2, and U2 followed another temporal cause U3, and this went on ad infinitum we wouldn't have the universe U1 in the first place. Think about it this way, when does U1 come into being? Only after U2 has come into being. When does U2 come into being? Only after U3 has come into being. This same problem will continue even if we go to infinity. If U1 depended on its coming into being on a chain of infinite temporal causes, U1 would never exist. As the Islamic Philosopher and Scholar Dr. Jaafar Idris writes,

“There would be no series of actual causes, but only a series of non-existents, as Ibn Taymiyyah explained. The fact, however, is that there are existents around us; therefore, their ultimate cause must be something other than temporal causes.”[11]

Created or brought into being by a non-created or un-caused entity

Since something cannot come from nothing, and self creation is absurd, including the unreasonableness of the aforementioned explanation, then the universe being created or brought into existence by an uncaused entity is the best explanation. This concept is intuitive but also agrees with reality: whatever begins to exist has a cause or a creator.

This cause or creator must be uncaused due to the absurdity of an infinite regress, in other words an indefinite chain of causes. To illustrate this better, if the cause of the universe had a cause and that cause had a cause ad infinitum, then there wouldn't be a universe to talk about in the first place (something we have already discussed above). For example, imagine if a Stock Trader on a trading floor at the Stock Exchange was not able to buy or sell his stocks or bonds before asking permission from the investor, and then this investor had to check with his, and this went on forever, would the Stock Trader every buy or sell his stocks or bonds? The answer is no. In similar light if we

apply this to the universe we would have to posit an uncaused cause due to this rational necessity. The Qur'an confirms the uncreatedness of the creator, God,

“He neither begets nor is born.” Qur'an 112:3

The cause or creator for the universe must be a single cause for several reasons. An attractive argument to substantiate this claim includes the use of the rational principle called Occam's razor. In philosophical terms the principle enjoins that we do not multiply entities beyond necessity. What this basically means is that we should stick to explanations that do not create more questions than it answers. In the context of the cause for the universe we have no evidence to claim multiplicity, in other words more than one. The Qur'an affirms the Oneness of the creator,

“Say: He is God, [who is] One.” Qur'an 112:1

However some philosophers and scientists claim: why doesn't the cause be the universe itself? Why can't the cause stop at the universe? Well, the problem with these claims is that they would imply that the universe created itself, which we have already discussed, is absurd. Additionally, we have good reasons to postulate a cause for the universe because the universe began to exist, and what begins to exist has a cause.

Our argument thus far allows us to conclude that this cause or creator must be non contingent meaning that its existence is dependent on nothing but itself. If it were contingent it would be one more effect in the chain of causes. The Qur'an verifies this,

“God is Independent of (all) creatures.” Qur'an 3:97

The cause or creator must also be transcendent, this means that the cause of the universe must exist outside of and apart from the universe. Since this being exists

apart from the universe it must be non-physical or immaterial, if it was material then it would be part of the universe. This is confirmed in the Qur'an,

“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing” Qur'an 42:11

This cause must have the power to create the universe, without this ability nothing could be created. The Qur'an testifies to God's power,

“Certainly, God has power over all things.” Qur'an 2:20

This cause must have a will, because it wouldn't be able to create the universe without one. What this means is that it must have a will so the power to create could be acted on. The Qur'an refers to God as having a will in many places, for instance,

“And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.” Qur'an 2:213

In summary, we have concluded what the Qur'an concluded over 1400 years ago, that a creator for the universe exists, that is one, has a will, is powerful, uncaused, immaterial and eternal.

Quantum Physics Undermines the Argument

A common contention to the central argument made in this essay is that the assumption – whatever begins to exist has a cause – is false. This is due to the apparent observations in the quantum vacuum that sub-atomic events behave spontaneously without any causes. In light of this common contention there are some good objections we can raise:

1. Firstly, the view that some events just happen, also known as indeterminism, for no reason at all is impossible to prove conclusively. Our inability to identify a cause does not necessarily mean that there is no cause.

2. Secondly, there are deterministic perspectives adopted by physicists to explain these so-called spontaneous sub-atomic events. For instance in the 1950s David Bohm showed there was an alternative formulation of quantum theory that is fully deterministic in its basic structure. [12] Commenting on Bohm's theory Polkinghorne explains,

“In Bohm's theory there are particles which are as unproblematically objective and deterministic in their behaviour as Sir Isaac Newton himself might have wished them to be. However, there is also a hidden wave, encoding information about the whole environment. It is not itself directly observable, but it influences in a subtle and highly sensitive manner the motions of the particles in just such a way as to induce the experimentally observed probabilistic effects.”[13]

What this means is that the apparent indeterminism present at the quantum level can be explained deterministically by this hidden wave that produces observed indeterministic or probabilistic effects.

However, since these two interpretations of quantum theory are empirically equivalent the choice between them will not be based on a scientific decision but on a metaphysical one. This leads to the philosophical objection to this contention.

3. Thirdly, from a philosophical perspective it is extremely difficult for these physicists (who adopt an indeterministic explanation of sub-atomic events) to justify their conclusions. This is because without the concept of causality we will not have the mental framework to understand our observations and experiences. In philosophical terms causality is a priori, which means knowledge we have independent of any experience. We know causality is true because we bring it to all our experience, rather than our experience bringing it to us. It is like wearing yellow-tinted glasses, everything

looks yellow not because of anything out there in the world, but because of the glasses through which we are looking at everything. Take the following example into consideration; imagine you are looking at the White House in Washington DC. Your eyes may wonder to the door, across the pillars, then to the roof and finally over to the front lawn. Now contrast this to another experience, you are on the river Thames in London and you see a boat floating past. What dictates the order in which you had these experiences? When you looked at the White House you had a choice to see the door first and then the pillars and so on. However, with the boat you had no choice as the front of the boat was the first to appear.

The point to take here is that you would not have been able to make the distinction that some experiences are ordered by yourself and others are ordered independently, unless we had the concept of causality. In absence of causality our experience would be very different from the way it is. It would be a single sequence of experiences only: one thing after another. So to accept that sub-atomic events do not correspond with causality would be tantamount of denying our own experience!

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A Muslim's response to "The God Delusion"

Author: Hamza Tzortzis

When I picked up "The God Delusion" by Richard Dawkins, I was expecting to encounter new reasons put forward to form a positive case for the Atheist worldview, but I have to say that I was disappointed. What I read were rehashed, incoherent and outdated arguments that made me realize that Richard Dawkins is not very well read in philosophy. In light of this I thought it would be useful to provide a compilation of arguments from existing material and respond to his main arguments in the following way:

1. Respond to what Dawkins considers his central argument;
2. Respond to what Philosophers consider his best argument.

Responding to what Dawkins considers his central argument

On pages 157-158 of "The God Delusion," Dawkins summarises what he maintains as "the central argument of my book":

1. One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises.
2. The natural temptation is to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself.
3. The temptation is a false one because the designer hypothesis immediately raises the larger problem of who designed the designer.
4. The most ingenious and powerful explanation is Darwinism evolution by natural selection and we don't have an equivalent explanation for physics.

5. We should not give up the hope of a better explanation arising in physics, something as powerful as Darwinism is for biology.

God almost certainly does not exist.

Preliminary Note

Before I go into Dawkins' main points, I would like to address his conclusion "God almost certainly does not exist." My main issue is – how does he conclude that God doesn't exist from the above statements? It seems to me that his conclusion just jumps out of thin air, to infer that God does not exist just shows how invalid his argument is. It seems to me that the only delusion is Dawkins' conviction that his arguments undermine the existence of God.

If we could conclude anything from Dawkins' argument it would be that we should not conclude that God exists based on the design of the universe. However, even if that is true, it doesn't mean that God doesn't exist; we can believe in God's existence from many other arguments, which include:

- The argument from morality;
- The miracle of the Qur'an;
- The cosmological argument;
- The argument from personal experience;
- The argument from consciousness.

If we were to accept all of Dawkins' statements, it would not be enough to reject the idea that God exists, and it certainly does not provide a positive case for Atheism.

However, many of his statements are false. Let us take his statements and respond accordingly.

Statement #1: One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises.

I believe that it is only a challenge if you wish to take God out of the picture. It is indeed a challenge if you presume atheism to be true. However for someone who is reflective and thinks deeply about things, I think the simplest and the best explanation – with the greatest explanatory power – is that there is a supernatural designer. The next point will address why God makes sense of the design in the universe.

Statement #2: The natural temptation is to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself.

This is not only a natural temptation but a rational conclusion brought to light based upon the fine-tuning of the initial conditions of the universe. Let me start off by presenting the premises of this argument:

1. The fine-tuning of the universe to permit life is due to physical necessity, chance, or design.
2. It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
3. Therefore, it is due to design.

Explaining Premise One

The existence of a universe that permits human life is due to conditions that must have been finely-tuned to a degree that is beyond comprehension. Take the following examples into consideration:

- The Strength of Gravity & the Atomic Weak Force: Physicist P. C. W. Davies concludes that a small change in the strength of gravity or of the atomic weak force would have prevented a universe that permits our existence. P. C. W. Davies argues that this small change is as small as one part in 10¹⁰⁰.
- Volume of the phase space of possible universes: Roger Penrose of Oxford University explains that the creator would have to aim for a very tiny volume of the “phase space of possible universes” to create a universe that resembles our own. This is quite technical science, but we should ask the question: how tiny is this volume? According to Penrose the volume would be 1/10 to the power of X which is 10¹²³. The precision required to produce a universe that resembles our own is much greater than the precision that would be required to hit one proton if the universe were a dartboard!

In light of the above, there are only three possible explanations for the presence of the above fine tuning of the universe:

1. Physical necessity;
2. Chance;
3. Design.

Why it cannot be Physical Necessity

This option is irrational. There is just no physical reason why these constants and quantities should have the values they do. As P. C. W. Davies explains:

“Even if the laws of physics were unique, it doesn’t follow that the physical universe itself is unique...the laws of physics must be augmented by cosmic initial conditions...there is nothing in present ideas about ‘laws of initial conditions’ remotely to suggest that their consistency with the laws of physics would imply uniqueness. Far

from it...it seems, then, that the physical universe does not have to be the way it is: it could have been otherwise.”

Additionally if anyone was to take the view that the fine-tuning of the universe to permit human life is due to physical necessity, it would imply that it would be impossible to have a universe not fit for life! However physicists maintain that the universe in which we live didn't have to be the way that it is, and there could have been many other universes that did not permit human life.

Why it cannot be Chance

Some people who do not understand the impossibility of the universe coming into being by chance exclaim, “It could have happened by chance!” However would they say chance explains how an elephant was sleeping in their garage overnight? Or how a 747 ended up parked in their garden? Even after their irrational perspective is highlighted, they still hold on to the theory that the universe can exist due to chance. In response to this I would argue that it is not just about chance but something the theorists such as William Dembski call “specified probability.”

Specified probability is a probability that also conforms to an independent pattern. To illustrate this, imagine you have a monkey in a room for twenty-four hours, typing a way on your laptop. In the morning you enter the room and you see, “To be or not to be!” The monkey has miraculously written out a part of a Shakespearian play! What you may have expected is random words such as “house,” “car,” and “apple.” However, in this case not only have you seen the improbability of typing English words – but they also conform to the independent pattern of English grammar! To accept this is just the result of blind chance would be irrational and counter discourse, as anyone can claim anything from this perspective. To put this in to context, British

mathematicians have calculated that if a monkey did type on a laptop at every possible moment, it would take 28 Billion years (!!!) to produce “To be or not to be”. In conclusion, accepting the chance hypothesis is tantamount to rejecting the existence of our own universe!

Since premises one and two are true, it follows that supernatural design is the most reasonable explanation for the fine-tuning of the universe to permit human life.

Statement #3: The temptation is a false one because the designer hypothesis immediately raises the larger problem of who designed the designer.

The above statement, which is a contention to the design argument is flawed for two main reasons. Firstly, anyone with a basic understanding of the philosophy of science will conclude that in the inference to the best explanation, the best explanation does not require an explanation! The following example illustrates this point. Imagine 500 years from now, a group of archaeologists start digging in London’s Hyde Park only to find parts of a car and a bus. They would be completely justified in inferring that these finds were not the result of any biological process but the products of an unknown civilization. However if some skeptics were to argue that we cannot make such inferences because we do not know anything about this civilization, how they lived and who created them, would that make the archaeologists conclusions untrue? Of course not!

Secondly, if we take this contention seriously it could undermine the very foundations of science and philosophy themselves. If we require an explanation for the basic assumptions of science, for example that the external world exists, where do you think our level of scientific progress would be? Additionally if we were to apply this type of question to every attempt at explaining the explanation, we would end up with an

infinite regression of explanations. And an infinite regression of explanations would defeat the whole purpose of science in the first place – which is to provide an explanation!

A Note on Rejecting the Supernatural

Dawkins' also rejects a supernatural designer because he thinks, as an explanation, it lack explanatory power; in other words, no progress is made with an explanation to the apparent fine-tuning. He raises this objection because he feels that a supernatural designer is just as complex as design. However Dawkins' objection is problematic as he assumes that a supernatural designer is as complex as the universe. But a supernatural designer, in other words God, is one of the simplest concepts understood by all. This opinion is expressed by many Philosophers including the famous atheist turned theist Professor Anthony Flew.

Dawkins' other assumption is that God is made of many parts; however, God is immaterial, transcendent and one. Just because God can do complex things does not make him complex, it seems to me that Dawkins confuses ability with nature. In other words, just because God can do complex things (such as creating the universe) it does not make His nature complex. So it stands to reason that God is the simplest, and therefore the best, explanation.

Statement #4: The most ingenious and powerful explanation is Darwinism evolution by natural selection and we don't have an equivalent explanation for physics. This statement is irrelevant due to the following reasons:

1. Evolution does not have its foot in the door;
2. Evolution is based upon incalculable probabilities;

3. Evolution is impossible because we have not spent enough time on Earth yet.

Let me expand upon these points.

1. Evolution does not have its foot in the door

With regards to the existence of God, evolution does not even have its foot in the door; it's billions years away. The fine-tuning argument mentioned above refers to the initial conditions of the universe and various constants that pre-date any evolutionary process. Simply put, evolution has no say.

2. Evolution is based upon incalculable probabilities

The odds against assembling the human genome spontaneously are incalculable. The probability of assembling the genome is between 4^{-180} to $4^{-110,000}$ and 4^{-360} to $4^{-110,000}$. These numbers give some feel for the unlikelihood of the species Homo sapiens. And if anyone were to accept evolution by chance, they would have to believe in a miracle as these numbers are so high! Therefore evolution itself would prove the existence of God!

3. Evolution is impossible because we have not had enough time on Earth yet

According to John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, the odds of assembling a single gene are between 4^{-180} to 4^{-360} . The implications of this are that there simply has not been enough time since the formation of the earth to try a number of nucleotide base combinations that can even remotely compare to these numbers!

Statement #5: We should not give up the hope of a better explanation arising in physics, something as powerful as Darwinism is for biology.

Dawkins basically says that since there is a naturalistic explanation for the apparent design in species and we do not have a similar explanation for physics, we should just wait. Does this not sound like blind faith to you? The statement presumes scientism to be the only way of establishing facts or sound conclusions. Why else would he want to wait for a naturalistic explanation? Dawkins' presumption that scientism is the only way to establish facts is not true because:

Scientism, which is the view that we should believe only what can be proven scientifically, is self-defeating. Scientism claims that a proposition is not true if it cannot be scientifically proven. However, the above claim itself cannot be scientifically proven. Therefore, according to this claim, the claim itself is not true, hence scientism defeats itself.

Scientism cannot prove necessary truths like mathematics and logic. For example, "if p implies q, and p, then q" and " $3 + 3 = 6$ " are necessary truths and not merely empirical generalisations. In fact, scientism requires these necessary truths, but it cannot prove them, and any attempt to do so would be tantamount to arguing in a circle.

Scientism is limited in its scope as it cannot address political or moral realities. Concerning morality, scientism can only provide "well-being" as a yardstick for moral truths. However, rapists, liars, and thieves could all have "well-being" due to their actions, therefore the moral landscape, as defined by science, is occupied by good and bad people, and from this perspective morality has no meaning.

It can be seen from the above that Dawkins' central argument fails and is an embarrassment to the scientific community, as atheist Philosopher Michael Ruse explains,

“unlike the new atheists, I take scholarship seriously. I have written that The God Delusion made me ashamed to be an atheist and I meant it. Trying to understand how God could need no cause, Christians claim that God exists necessarily. I have taken the effort to try to understand what that means. Dawkins and company are ignorant of such claims and positively contemptuous of those who even try to understand them, let alone believe them. Thus, like a first-year undergraduate, he can happily go around asking loudly, “What caused God?” as though he had made some momentous philosophical discovery.”

Responding to what Philosophers consider his best argument

According to Philosopher and lecturer at Yale University, Gregory E. Granssle, Dawkins’ strongest argument can be found on page 55:

“A universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without.”

Dawkins’ argument can be summarised in the following way:

1. A universe created by God would be different than the one created by nature;
2. The universe we live in fits better to a universe created by nature;
3. Therefore the universe we live in is most likely to have been created by nature.

I would argue that Dawkins’ argument couldn’t be any further away from the truth; this is because the universe that we live in actually makes more sense being created by God for the following reasons.

1. The universe is ordered and open to rational analysis

If God did not exist, the universe would not display the order it does, and it would not be finely-tuned to permit human life. Professor Roger Penrose states, “There is a certain sense in which I would say the universe has a purpose. It’s not there just somehow by chance...I don’t think that’s a very fruitful or helpful way of looking at the universe.”

Additionally, the very fact that we can observe and perform rational analysis on the patterns we perceive in the universe makes more sense if God did exist, because in a naturalistic universe things would be expected to be more chaotic. This does not mean a universe without a God could not be ordered; however it is more likely that God would create an ordered universe, and since the universe we live in is ordered it makes sense that God’s existence fits well with our universe

2. The universe contains conscious and aware beings

A universe that contains consciousness and awareness makes sense with the existence of God. A universe without a God would be very different to the one we are living in.

Explanation

Human beings experience things all the time. This article you are reading is an experience; even talking about your experience is an experience. However the ultimate reality that we know from any experience is the one who experiences it – in other words ourselves. When we realise that there is a first-person, an “I”, “me” or “mine,” we come to face a profound mystery. The Philosopher Roy Abraham Varghese puts it nicely when he wrote, “To reverse Descartes, ‘I am, therefore I think...’ Who is this ‘I’? ‘Where’ is it? How did it come to be? Your self is not just something physical.”

The self is not a physical thing; it is not contained in any cell or biological structure. The most unchallenged and intuitive reality is that we are all aware, but we cannot describe or explain what this awareness is. One thing that we can be sure of is that the self cannot be explained biologically or chemically. The main reason for this is that science does not discover the self; it is actually the other way round. For science to try and explain the truth of the self would be tantamount to arguing in a circle! Even scientists recognise this; the physicist Gerald Schroeder points out that there is no real difference between a heap of sand and the brain of an Einstein. The advocates of a physical explanation for the self end up in a muddle as they require answers to even bigger questions, such as “How can certain bits of matter suddenly create a new reality that has no resemblance to matter?” So if the self cannot be explained physically then the next question must be asked: “How did it come to be?” The history of the universe indicates that consciousness spontaneously arose, and language emerged without any evolutionary forerunner. So where did it come from? Even the neo-atheists have failed to come to terms with the nature of the self and its source, because no physical explanation is coherent enough to be convincing. Even Richard Dawkins almost admits defeat concerning the self and consciousness; he states, “We don’t know. We don’t understand it.”

The best explanation for the nature and source of the self is that it came from a source that is thinking, aware and conscious. How else can the self, which is an entity with a capacity to reflect and experience, manifest itself? It cannot have come from unconscious matter incapable to experience and ponder. Simply put, matter cannot produce concepts and perceptions, therefore we can conclude that the self cannot have a material basis but must have come from a living source that transcends the

material world; and this is best explained by God. No other answer provides an adequate explanation for this phenomenon.

3. The universe contains objective morality

We all believe that killing 6 million Jews during World War II was morally wrong, however not only do we believe it was morally wrong we believe it was objectively morally wrong. What I mean by objective is that if the Nazis had successfully taken over Europe and brainwashed us to believe that it was ok to commit genocide, it would still be objectively morally wrong regardless of human experience. However since our universe contains objective morality then it can only make sense with God's existence, because God is required as rational basis for objective morality. Without God morality is subjective, because God is the only conceptual anchor that transcends human subjectivity. So the universe with objective morality makes no sense without God. In this light the Muslim or theist may argue:

1. If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist;
2. The universe with objective moral values does exist;
3. Therefore, God exists.

Explaining the key premise

The question about objective good or bad, in other words objective morality, has been discussed by various moral philosophers. Many have concluded that there is no objective morality without God, for instance the late J. L. Mackie in his book "Ethics" states that there are no objective moral values. Humanist philosopher Paul Kurtz aptly puts it as,

“The central question about moral and ethical principles concerns this ontological foundation. If they are neither derived from God nor anchored in some transcendent ground, are they purely ephemeral?”

Paul Kurtz is right; God is the only conceptual anchor that transcends human subjectivity, so without God there is no rational basis for objective morality. To explain this further let us discuss alternative conceptual foundations for morality. In God’s absence, there are only two alternative foundations:

1. Social pressure
2. Evolution

Both social pressures and evolution provide no objective basis for morality as they both claim that our morality is contingent on changes: biological and social. Therefore morality cannot be binding and true regardless of who believes in them. Therefore without God, there is no objective basis for morality. God as a concept is not subjective, therefore having God as the basis for morality makes them binding and objective, because God transcends human subjectivity. The following statement by Richard Taylor, an eminent ethicist, correctly concludes,

“Contemporary writers in ethics, who blithely discourse upon moral right and wrong and moral obligation without any reference to religion, are really just weaving intellectual webs from thin air; which amounts to saying that they discourse without meaning.”

Since the universe contains objective morality, and God’s existence is necessary as a conceptual foundation for objective morals, then the universe we live in makes sense with the existence of God.

A Quick Note on Religious “Evils”

Before I conclude I would like to highlight that a response to Dawkins’ other contentions with the concept of God and religious life. Dawkins seems to attribute all the negative and evil things to religion. However there is a strong argument that these things are not unique to religion itself, but the common conceptual dominator is humanity. This is summarised well by Keith Ward, the former Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, he writes,

“It is very difficult to think of any organised human activity that could not be corrupted...The lesson is that anti-religious corruptions and religious corruptions are both possible. There is no magic system or belief, not even belief in liberal democracy, which can be guaranteed to prevent it.”

To illustrate this let me use the outdated cliché of “religions are the cause war and conflict” and show how war and conflict are not unique to religions. In the relatively short history of secularism the following massacres have committed in the name of non-religious ideologies such a communism, nationalism and social-Darwinism:

- 70,000,000 under chairman Mao
- 20,000,000 under Stalin
- 2,000,000 no longer exist because of Pol Pot
- 700,000 innocent Iraqi’s in the current occupation
- 500,000 Iraqi children in the 10 year sanctions

So it can be clearly seen above that war and conflict are not religious monopolies, rather they are human phenomena and not unique to religion. As Professor Stephen L. Carter argues in “Civility”:

“[T]he statement that wars have been fought in the name of God is a non sequitur. As the theologian Walter Wink once pointed out, more people have died in the twentieth century’s secular wars than in the preceding fifty centuries of fighting combined.... No religious war in history, not all the religious wars of history added together, did as much damage as this century’s wars of nationalism and ideology.”

Conclusion

This article attempted to respond to Richard Dawkins’ best-seller “The God Delusion” by responding to his central argument and the argument that Philosophers consider to be his best. However, intellectual gymnastics – no matter how truthful – seldom convinces others, so I thought it would best to allow the expression of God – the Qur’an – to have the final say. In the wonderful eloquence and sublime style God says,

“In the creation of the heavens and Earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ships which sail the seas to people’s benefit, and the water which God sends down from the sky – by which He brings the Earth to life when it was dead and scatters about in it creatures of every kind – and the varying direction of the winds, and the clouds subservient between heaven and Earth, there are signs for people who use their intellect.” Qur’an, 2:164

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A Muslim's Response to "Young Atheist's Handbook"

Author: Hamza Andreas Tzortzis

The Young Atheist's Handbook (TYAH) was first published in 2012. I purchased the book the moment it was available and I was probably one of the first people to receive it in the post. After reading parts of TYAH, I immediately contacted the author and science teacher, Alom Shaha, to enquire whether he was willing to engage in a discussion on the issues he raised. He politely refused and explained that TYAH is a personal story, and he doesn't wish to participate in debates. (Fast forward a few years, Alom and I had a brief encounter via twitter [1] where I subsequently received an email from the author agreeing to arrange a friendly discussion on faith and non-faith related issues. I haven't heard from Alom since that twitter and email exchange, but he did say that it will take some time). I find Alom to be a very friendly, warm and polite man, and after reading his story I couldn't help but deeply empathise with him. Alom is a science teacher born to Bengali parents, and he describes himself as an ex-Muslim that was brought up in South London. When he is not teaching he works as a film-maker, writer and science communicator.[2]

The social context in which he was brought up has, as he admits, obviously shaped his conclusions about life. I can't but feel that the Muslim community is partially responsible for Alom adopting an atheist world view. Unfortunately, many of us within the Muslim community have created a social malaise by removing ourselves from the timeless values of Islam, and we have constructed a narrative which is far from intellectual. We have failed to revive intellectual Islam within the grass root Muslim communities. We have not been able to articulate a compassionate and cogent case

for our tradition to young thinkers, students and professionals. The Young Atheist's Handbook is a direct result of our collective failure as a Muslim community to revive classical Islam, and a natural consequence of our current state of being. Even though Muslims may not be the target audience for TYAH, we must take lessons from this book. Don't misunderstand me here, there is a lot of good work happening within the Muslims community. My points are general and not specific; we have not yet achieved critical mass in the revival of intellectual Islam and its timeless values.

Putting that aside for a moment, the reason I decided to write a response is because The Young Atheist's Handbook has recently been sent to every secondary school in England and Wales, free of charge. [3] The organisation behind this initiative is the British Humanist Association (BHA). This organisation is a missionary type of organisation that seeks to promote Humanism. This is easy to conclude by reading the aims on their website. They express that they want to promote Humanism as a life stance,

“Using all suitable means, including events, courses, publications, online resources, teaching materials and speakers for schools and colleges, the press, broadcast, online and social media, we will maintain an extensive promotional and educational programme to extend and deepen public understanding of Humanism as a lifestance.”[4]

the young atheist's handbook british humanist association I have had quite a few encounters with members of BHA. A few years ago I had a discussion with Dr. Peter Cave who is the Chair of the Humanist Philosophers. Our discussion was on “Can we live better lives without religion?” [5] I have also engaged with other members of the group, including Professor Simon Blackburn, Dr. Brendan Larvor, Dr. Stephen Law, Professor Richard Norman, Dr. Nigel Warburton [6], and more recently I have had a very warm and nuanced exchange with Professor Peter Simons. [7] I have even shared platform with current chief executive of the organisation Andrew Compson. To conclude, I have had direct experience with the BHA in challenging their ideas and worldview. Therefore, it was just natural to respond to their current initiative.

Another reason for this response is regard to a sense of duty. There are many seemingly false and irrational ideas which needed to be deconstructed and explored in depth. The Young Atheist’s Handbook, although written in a warm and engaging style, is fundamentally irrational. I can see, for example, how young minds may read this book and be taken in by its emotive and human voice. I do not want others to normalise irrationality, because this book does exactly that. The book seems to use a human-centric and emotive literary style as a cover for hiding many of its false presuppositions and misrepresentations. The purpose of this response is to bring these to light and explore these concepts in depth. Aptly, Alom himself humbly admits that the book can contain flaws,

“If you’ve noticed the occasional bouts of confusion, contradictions, flawed logic, or misinterpreted ideas, well, they’re there because I am a flawed individual, confused and contradictory. I put these shortcomings forward unashamedly...”[8]

Now you can imagine that a book over 200 pages will contain various arguments and assertions. Though I shall not be addressing every single point raised, a thematic response will be published in parts. To begin, I will address the key points that form Alom’s main reasons for adopting the atheist worldview.

This introductory chapter relives some of Alom’s memories about his mother and the way she died. His love and yearning for his mother resonates in every sentence. Alom talks about his mother’s mental illness and how his community dealt with her condition.

“My mother suffered from all sorts of medical problems, but it was mental illness that landed her in hospital on what seemed to be a regular basis when we were growing up. My father and the other Bengali adults around us openly described my mother as fagol, which means ‘crazy’; some even said she was possessed. So we as children thought of our mum as loony, when in fact she was very, very ill. It was only as an adult that I learned she had suffered from bipolar disorder or, as it used to be known, ‘manic depression’...”[9]

It is really sad that the Muslim community around him portrayed such ignorant attitudes toward his mother and mental illness. No child should think of their mother as 'loony' and experience discriminatory attitudes towards the mentally ill. Consider the Islamic intellectual tradition; Muslims and Arab scientists who understood and internalised Islamic values were pioneers in dealing with mental and psychological disorders. For example, in the 8th century, the physician Razi built the first psychiatric ward in Baghdad. The 11th century physician ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna – the founder of Modern Medicine) understood most mental illness as physiologically based. [10] Interestingly Abu Zayd al-Balkhi, a 9th century physician, wrote a book on what is now known as cognitive behavioural therapy. His book Sustenance of the Soul was probably the first written account in distinguishing between endogenous and reactive depression.[11] These pioneers and Muslim intellectuals were directly influenced by the values of Islam. These include the words of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that encourages seeking the cure for illnesses, “There is no disease that Allah has sent down except that He also has sent down its treatment.”[12] and the universal and encompassing value of compassion, “Those who show mercy will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Show mercy to those who are on earth and the One Who is in heaven will show mercy to you.”[13]

After describing his experience of losing his mother, Alom mentions a few points about the mind and the brain. He asserts that we are just a result of the neuro-chemical happenings in the brain and there is no “soul” or immaterial consciousness. Sandwiched between his brief discussions on neuroscience and the philosophy of the mind, he mentions his brother Shalim who suffered from a range of disabilities including mental health problems. Again, I cannot but empathise with Alom and the

way he writes really engages the heart. I don't think I can ever understand what he went through, but yet I have a deep feeling of empathy and sadness. Alom is extremely courageous and unashamedly honest about his feelings and emotions. In this sense, Alom is inspirational. However, I want to address his point about the mind and the brain, as it seems to be a key argument for his rejection of an afterlife and God. He writes,

“The evidence suggests that what we think of as our soul is very much the result of physical processes – electrical pulses and chemical reactions – in our brain. Francis Crick...puts it like this: ‘You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.’”[14]

He also argues that “...there is no mind-brain duality, that there is no soul, and that a ‘person’ is very much a result of electrical and chemical happenings in the brain.”[15]

This unfortunately is a gross misrepresentation of what is actually being discussed in neuroscience and the philosophy of the mind today. To fully understand the brain and the mind, in other words ‘consciousness’, relying on false materialist assumptions will lead to absurdities. It also ignores that which requires explaining in the first place; the hard problem of consciousness.

It is quite clear now that if I am thinking or feeling some pain there will be some sort of activity in my brain that indicates that I am thinking or feeling pain. No one is denying that the brain and consciousness have some form of a relationship, but I must stress here, it is just a relationship. The brain and consciousness (also referred to as the mind) are not the same thing. Take the following analogy into consideration: the brain is the car, and consciousness is the driver. The car will not move without the driver and the driver will not be able to start the car – or use it properly – if it is damaged or broken. However, they are both different and independent in some way.

So what are the problems that specialists in the field are trying to address, and why is the brain and consciousness not the same thing? The answer to these questions is in what is known as the hard problem of consciousness. The hard problem of consciousness concerns the fact that we have personal subjective experiences. In other words, the problem is that we cannot find out via materialistic means what it is like to be a conscious organism or what it is like to have a particular experience. Professor David Chalmers, who popularised the phrase the hard problem of consciousness, explains, “If any problem qualifies as the problem of consciousness, it is this one. In this central sense of “consciousness”, an organism, and a mental state is conscious if there is something it is like to be in that state.”[16]

Professor Torin Alter adds another dimension to the definition of the hard problem of consciousness by focussing on why physical brain processes produce conscious experience, “How does my brain’s activity generate those experiences? Why those and

not others? Indeed, why is any physical event accompanied by conscious experience? The set of such problems is known as the hard problem of consciousness...”[17]

Let me simplify and elaborate on the above definitions with an example; say for instance you were to eat a strawberry, scientists would be able to find correlations in the brain that indicate that you are eating something, and maybe even the fact that you are eating a piece of fruit, they may even find out that you find it tasty or sweet. But scientific materialist perspectives could never find out or examine what it is like to eat a strawberry for you, or what tastiness or sweetness means and feels for you, and why you have had the subjective experience of what it is like to eat a strawberry.

It seems to me that Alom is assuming that science has now shown that everything we feel and experience is just a result of biological happenings in the brain. This is simply not true. The biological attempts have failed to solve the hard problem of consciousness. Some of these biological attempts include Francis Crick’s and Christof Koch’s *Toward a Neurobiological Theory of Consciousness*, Bernard Baars’s *Global Workplace theory*, Gerald Elderman’s and Giulio Tononi’s *The Dynamic Coretheory*, Rodolfo Llinas’s *Thalamocortical Binding theory*, Victor Lamme’s *Recurrent Processing theory*, Semir Zeki’s *Microconsciousness theory* and Antonio Damasio’s *The Feeling of What Happens theory*. Although it is not the scope of this response to discuss the technicalities and shortcomings of these empirical theories, none of them comprehensively address the hard problem of consciousness.

Alom refers to Francis Crick, the biologist and neuroscientist, as an appeal to authority to justify his points. This is another misrepresentation. Crick's view are more nuanced than the crude generalisation of that we are "a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules." [18] To explain the background to Crick's views, he developed the theory known as Toward a Neurobiological Theory of Consciousness with his colleague Kristof Koch. [19] Crick's and Koch's theory is based upon certain neural oscillations in the cerebral cortex, and they claim that these oscillations are the basis of consciousness because they seem to be correlated with awareness, more specifically visual awareness. The main criticism of the theory involves the following questions: why do oscillations give rise to subjective experience? How, by just viewing these neurological happenings, can we appreciate what that experience is like? Putting this criticism aside, Koch openly admits these limitations to his theory. In a published interview he confesses:

"Well, let's first forget about the real difficult aspects, like subjective feelings, because they may not have a scientific solution. The subjective state of play, of pain, of pleasure, of seeing blue, of smelling a rose—there seems to be a huge jump between the materialistic level, of explaining molecules and neurons, and the subjective level." [20] In a more recent review of Crick's and Koch's work professor Antti Revonsuo asserts that Crick and Koch "admit that finding the NCC [neural correlates of consciousness] does not in itself solve the problem of consciousness." [21]

In my view Alom adopts a false materialist bias. He seems to assume that science will eventual explain consciousness. However, if we examine the scientific method and the

philosophy of science, we will understand that subjective conscious experiences are outside of the scope of the scientific enterprise. Science is restricted to only that which can be observed, and subjective conscious states cannot be observed. Nonetheless, some hard-core empiricists may argue that we may be able to correlate neuro-chemical activity in the brain with subjective experience. But this is impossible, because neuro-chemical activity in the brain can only indicate that something is happening, and not what it is like for that something to happen. A simple piece of evidence to highlight this impossibility is that you can have different levels of subjective experiences of pain with two people with the same injury, and yet have the same type of neuro-chemical patterns in the brain. Also, as Professor Chalmers argues that if we were to understand every behavioural and cognitive function related to consciousness and all the neuro-chemical happenings in the brain were mapped out, there would still be an unanswered question: why is the performance of these functions accompanied by conscious experience?[22] Therefore it is impossible to measure or deduce what that subjective experience of pain actually is, or why it occurs, just by observing brain correlations. This is why Alom's assertion that we are just biology is wrong. This doesn't mean we are not affected by our neurophysiology, we are, but it is not as simple as that, as presented by my initial car analogy.

So where does God fit in? Well, theistic explanation for the emergence and reality of consciousness has greater explanatory power than competing biological explanations. I must stress here however that I am not denying biological explanations and just replacing them with theism. What I am advocating is adding theism as a philosophical basis to fully explain that which materialism cannot: the hard problem of consciousness. For a more detailed explanation on the failure of materialism to explain

consciousness and the comprehensiveness of theist explanation, please read the previous post “Consciousness and the New Scientist Magazine: Reflection on False Materialist Assumptions”. [23]

Chapter 2 is entitled “Being Good” and it addresses morality, Euthyphro’s dilemma, the problem of evil, and much more. In this part of the response I will address the points I have included above. In part 2 I will address the other issues he raises.

Alom in his usual style couches these arguments with profound personal experiences. On goodness he writes,

“Such people believe that you cannot be truly if you do not believe in Him...To these people, God is the ultimate source of morality; they might even claim that the existence of morality is itself proof of the existence of God because if there is not God, there would be no reason to be good.” [24]

This to me sounds like a misrepresentation of mainstream theism. Theists do not argue that atheists cannot display good behaviour or do not have good morals. There are plenty of atheists and irreligious people who are morally good. To suggest otherwise is false. Alom’s other points are actually true; God is the source of morality, He is a motivation and reason to be good, and morality does prove His existence. These points can be explained rationally and by referring to the sociology of religion. Let’s take the

point that God is the ultimate source of morality and that morality is proof of His existence.

I would like to ask Alom a question, although hypothetical in nature, it highlights the point I'm trying to make: is killing an innocent 5 year old objectively morally wrong? If so, and I doubt that he will deny this, then it necessitates God's existence. Please note that one has to be careful here, no one is saying "You can't be an atheist and display moral or good behaviour" or "You have to believe in God to have moral traits" or "Just by being a believer you will have good behaviour". What I am saying is that if God does not exist then there are NO objective moral values. Moral values such as "Murdering innocent people for entertainment is wrong" and "Defending the innocent is good" are merely social conventions without God. Just like saying it is wrong to burp loudly at the dinner table. This doesn't devalue how we feel about good and evil, but from an academic perspective we need to realise that the moment we accept something to be objectively good or objectively bad, is the moment God is required as a basis for that objectivity.

Before I discuss why God is required as a basis or foundation for objective morals, I would like to explain what I mean by objective. What I mean by objective is something that is not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts, and not dependent on the mind for existence. In the context of morality, let me elaborate with a few examples: "If the whole world agreed to the fact that eating a dead person is a good thing to do, it would still be an immoral thing to do", "If the whole world claimed that it was morally ok to kill an innocent person, it would still be

immoral and abhorrent” and “If the whole world claimed that it was morally good to set up unjust trade agreements with Africa, it would still be wrong.”

Professor of theology Ian Markham summarises this sense of objectivity we have as human beings when it comes to morality,

“Embedded in the word ‘ought’ is the sense of a moral fact transcending our life and world...The underlying character of moral language implies something universal and external.”[25]

So why is God required as a foundation for objective morals? It is quite simple, God is the only concept that transcends our subjectivity. Professor Markham explains,

“God explains the mysterious ought pressing down our lives; and God explains the universal nature of the moral claim. As God is outside the world, God the creator can be both external and make universal commands.”[26]

However, there are competing foundations to explain objective morality. The main ones include, biology, social pressure and moral realism. Before I explain how these fail to adequately and comprehensively provide a basis for objective morals, it is interesting to note that some atheist thinkers actually admit that without God there

are no objective moral claims. The late moral philosopher J. L. Mackie in his book *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, J. L. Mackie opens by boldly stating that,

“There are no objective values...The claim that values are not objective, are not part of the fabric of the world, is meant to include not only moral goodness, which might be most naturally equated with moral value, but also other things that could be more loosely called moral values or disvalues – rightness and wrongness, duty, obligation, an action’s being rotten and contemptible, and so on.”[27]

Mackie is right here. The minute we assert the objectivity of morals we imply that they exist outside of the mind and human perception, therefore they require a basis or grounding. However, if someone has the non-negotiable presupposition that God does not exist, then a rational basis for objective morals will be absent, for that reason the some atheist thinkers reject of objectivity of morals.

Not all atheists agree. As mentioned above some claim that there are alternative foundations for morality. Let’s address the first alternative, biology. Can biology explain our sense of objective morality? The simple answer is no. Charles Darwin provides us with an interesting “extreme example” of what it means when biology or natural selection forms the foundation of morality,

“If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our un-married females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, and no one would think of interfering.”[28]

In other words, if it is true that our morals are contingent on biological changes then it would render morals as subject to these changes, therefore they cannot be objective. If we happened to be reared as the Nurse Shark we would probably think it would be ok to rape our partners, as the Nurse Shark wrestles and forces itself on its mate. Some respond by asserting that it is specifically natural selection that forms the basis for our sense of objective morality. Again this is false. All that natural selection can do is give us the capacity to formulate moral rules and not provide a basis for them. As the moral philosopher Philip Kitcher writes,

“All that natural selection may have done for us is to equip us with the capacity for various social arrangements and the capacity to formulate ethical rules.”[29]

The second alternative is social pressure or consensus. This I believe is plain to see and where a lot of atheists and humanists face a sticky wicket. If social pressure or consensus forms the basis for objective morals then we face a huge problem. Firstly, it makes morals subjective and relative, as they are subject to inevitable social changes. Secondly, it leads to moral absurdities. If someone accepts social consensus as a basis for morals then how can we justify our moral position towards what the Nazis did in

1940s Germany? How can we claim that what they did was objectively morally wrong? Well, we can't. Even if you claim there were people in Germany who fought against the Nazis, the point is there was strong consensus or social pressure.

The final alternative is moral realism. Some philosophers would argue that there are objective morals, but they are not grounded in human opinion or evolution, they just are. There are a few problems with this position. What does it mean that justice just exists? Or objective morally good behaviour just exists? It seems that they are trying to have their cake and eat it! Muslims can make similar claims and get away with it, such as "Islam is true" and that "The Qur'an is God's word". Such assertions without evidence are baseless. Significantly one has to understand that if morals are objective (they are outside of an individual's personal opinion or mind) then they require a rational explanation or basis, otherwise how are they objective?

In light of the above discussion it is obvious that objective morality necessitates God's existence as He external to the universe and can make universal moral claims.

Alom seems to understand why theists articulate the above arguments and responds with Plato's dilemma or Euthyphro's dilemma. Alom, summarises it quite well,

"is something morally good because God approves of it, or does God approve of it because it is morally good?...This dilemma is problematic for people who believe in an

all-powerful God because it requires you to believe one of two things: either morality is defined by that which God deems moral and therefore what is good or evil is arbitrary, or morals exist outside of God's will, and so God Himself is bound by laws which He is not responsible for, thus contradicting the idea of an omnipotent God.”[30]

This intuitively seems to be a strong contention. However, a little reflection exposes it as a false dilemma. There is a third alternative, God is good. As Professor of Philosophy Shabbir Akhtar in his book *The Qur'an and the Secular Mind* writes:

“There is a third alternative: a morally stable God of the kind found in scripture, a supreme being who would not arbitrarily change his mind about the goodness of compassion and the evil of sexual misconduct. Such a God always commands good because his character and nature are good.”[31]

Alom's natural response, similar to many of his colleagues, would be “you must know what good is to define God as good, therefore you haven't solved the problem”. The simple response would be that God is definitive of what good is, in simple words – God defines what good is. Why is God the definition of good? Because He is the only being worthy of worship and the only being worthy of worship is the most perfect and moral being. The Qur'an affirms these points,

“And your god is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.”[32]

“He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”[33]

In summary moral truths are ultimately derivatives of God’s will expressed via His commands, and his commands do not contradict His nature, which is good, wise, pure and perfect.

Alom can reply to the above conclusion by simply denying that morality is objective. Fair enough. I agree, if someone doesn’t accept the axiom that morals are objective then the argument doesn’t work. But here is the double edged sword for Alom. The minute he denies the objectivity of any moral claim, he has no right to point the moral finger at Islam. The irony is that this is exactly what he does in his book. He should put a caveat to all of his moral judgements and simply say “this is my subjective view”, and by doing almost renders his whole book pointless.

Alom's assumption is that an atheist can be good just like anyone else. This is true. But there seems to be another hidden assumption which is a little bit more subtle. He is implying that atheists can be as good as theists. He writes,

“I, like the primatologist Frans de Waal, ‘have never seen convincing evidence that a belief in God keeps people from immoral behavior’, and I don’t feel less moral for not believing in God.”[34]

This is not entirely true. I am not asserting this due some subconscious bias, but it is the conclusion of academic studies in the field of the sociology of religion. The research suggests that theists or religious people seem to have greater moral motivation and this leads them to doing more good than non religious people.

Here are some fascinating studies:

“An analysis based in findings from a questionnaire survey of 300 undergraduate students in the USA indicated that religious persons were more likely to carry out altruistic acts (Zook 1982). Lynn and Smith (1991) reported that those who did voluntary work in the UK gave religion as one of the main reasons for their participation...Research by Perkins examined the relationship between Judeo-Christian religiosity and humanitarianism. The study was based on data collected during 1978-9 at five different colleges and universities in England and the USA and data collected

during 1988-90 at the same institutions. This study shows that religiosity was more salient in directly promoting humanitarian compassion and that the influence of other socio-demographic factors failed to attain any level of significance.”[35]

Social scientist Arthur C. Brooks analysed data that consisted of nearly 30,000 observations drawn from 50 communities across the United States and ask individuals about their civic behaviour:

“The differences in charity between secular and religious people are dramatic. Religious people are 25 percentage points more likely than secularists to donate money (91 percent to 66 percent) and 23 points more likely to volunteer time (67 percent to 44 percent). And, consistent with the findings of other writers, these data show that practicing a religion is more important than the actual religion itself in predicting charitable behavior. For example, among those who attend worship services regularly, 92 percent of Protestants give charitably, compared with 91 percent of Catholics, 91 percent of Jews, and 89 percent from other religions.”[36]

The Oxford Handbook of The Sociology of Religion concludes that religious Americans give more than the non-religious:

“However, regarding American giving to charitable organizations, Regnerus et al. (1998) found an association with religiosity by analysing the data from the 1996

Religious Identity and Influence Survey. The 13 percent of the American population which considered itself non-religious gave less money to charitable organizations than did the rest of the population which held religious beliefs.”[37]

In 2002 Smith, McCullough and Poll, in their journal A meta analytic review of the religiousness-depression association: evidence for main effects and stress buffering effects carried out an analysis of over 200 social studies and found that high religiousness predicts a rather lower risk of depression, drug abuse and fewer suicide attempts.[38]

In 2002 Bryan Johnson and colleagues of the University of Pennsylvania Centre for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society reviewed 498 studies that had been published in peer reviewed journals. They concluded that a large majority of studies showed a positive correlation between religious commitment and higher levels of perceived well-being and self esteem, and lower levels of hypertension, depression and criminal delinquency.[39]

A contention to the above includes the citation of prison studies that seem to argue that there is a gross overrepresentation of religious people in prison than non-religious. This is true. However these types of correlations actually prove nothing. They would only be considered robust if a correlation can be made between a prisoner’s religious beliefs and the crimes they committed. The level of religiosity must also be established, one can argue that their crimes were committed because they were not

religious enough or deviated away from their religious values. I thought I would mention this as it is a popular outdated atheist cliché.

Alom describes the nasty attitude portrayed by some Muslims concerning the death of his mother and the disability of his brother,

“Shortly after my mother died, I was confronted with just how obnoxious and vile these beliefs can be. While I was hanging around after playing football one afternoon, an older Bangladeshi boy, who had just found out that my youngest brother was disabled, decided to share his deep theological knowledge with me and tell me that my mother’s death and my brother’s disabilities were proof God thought there was something rotten with my family. He argued that Allah didn’t let these things happen for no reason, so these misfortunes were clearly Allah’s will, events to punish my family. Thankfully, some of the other older boys told him to shut up, but I remember feeling like I’d been kicked in the stomach.”[40]

This behaviour and attitude is despicable and antithetical to Islamic values. The actual position concerning life’s trials and tribulations in the Islamic tradition is extremely empowering. Suffering, evil, harm, pain and problems in general are seen as a test. This life is not for one giant party. We have been created with a purpose and that purpose is to worship God. Part of this is to be tested with trials. The empowering Islamic view is that tests are seen as sign of God’s love. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “When Allah loves a servant, He tests him.”[41] Why does God love those who He

tests, because it is an avenue to achieve Divine mercy and enter the eternal bliss of paradise. God points this out clearly in the Qur'an,

“Do you suppose that you will enter the Garden without first having suffered like those before you? They were afflicted by misfortune and hardship, and they were so shaken that even [their] messenger and the believers with him cried, ‘When will God’s help arrive?’ Truly, God’s help is near.”[42]

The beauty of this is that God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, has already empowered us and tells us that we have what it takes to overcome these trials.

“God does not burden any soul with more than it can bear.”[43]

If the Muslim community around Alom had a proper understanding of Islam, maybe he would not be citing suffering and evil in the world as an argument against God’s existence. As I mentioned previously, we Muslims need to take lessons from this book.

Alom summarises the argument that evil and suffering suggest that God does not exist,

“It seems to me that the problem of evil is insurmountable for theists, be they theologians capable of intellectual gymnastics or ordinary believers who don’t spend much time thinking about things. It is hard not to look at all the suffering and evil in

the world and avoid the conclusion that God doesn't exist – or, if He does, as Depeche Mode put it He's got a 'sick sense of humour'.”[44]

This argument, from an emotional perspective, can seem convincing. Any decent human being, like Alom, will always raise this question. However, putting emotions to the side, is the problem of evil argument rationally convincing? Absolutely not. What first comes to mind is that even if this argument was a strong one it would still force one's mind to accept God's existence. In order to explain what I mean here, let's first summarise the problem of evil and suffering argument,

“It is unbelievable that a Good All-Powerful (omnipotent) being exists with all the evil and suffering in the world.”

And in its logical form,

1. A good, all-powerful God exists
2. Evil and suffering exists
3. Therefore a good, all-powerful God doesn't exist

A basic lesson in logic will make one realise that this argument is not deductive. The conclusion doesn't necessarily follow from the previous two statements. Rather the conclusion is probably true. Essentially it is a probabilistic argument. Therefore if the one who adopts this argument is consistent with his reasoning he will have to accept

God due to the argument from design. The reason for this is that the design argument is also premised on probability. In other words, it is highly likely there is a cosmic designer due to the apparent fine-tuning of the constants and laws in the universe. If Alom is consistent here he would have to accept God's existence using the design argument as it uses the same thing to prove God which Alom uses to reject God – probability.

The problem of evil argument is a very weak one due to it being based on two major false assumptions. These are:

1. God is only good and all-powerful
2. God has not given us any reasons to why He has permitted evil and suffering

The problem of evil argument misrepresents the Islamic conception of God. God is not just good and all-powerful, rather He has many names and attributes. These attributes are understood holistically via God's Oneness. One of His names is The-Wise. Since the very nature of God is wisdom it follows that whatever He wills is in line with wisdom. If something has a wisdom behind it means it has a reason. Alom replies to the above reasoning in the following way,

“The problem of evil genuinely stumps most ordinary believers. In my experience, they usually respond with an answer along the lines of, ‘God moves in mysterious ways.’ Sometimes they’ll say, ‘Suffering is God’s way of testing us,’ to which the obvious

response is, 'Why does he have to test us in such evil ways' To which the response is, 'God moves in mysterious ways.' You get the idea." [45]

Alom builds his own straw man here. He misrepresent the theist's position. He also commits another fallacy of arguing from ignorance. The point here is that just because the wisdom cannot be understood it doesn't mean there is no wisdom. This reasoning is typical of toddlers. Many toddlers get told off by their parents for something they want to do, such as drinking an enticing brown gold liquid, also known as whisky. The toddlers usually cry or have a tantrum because they are thinking how bad mummy and daddy are, but he doesn't realise there is a wisdom that he cannot access. The Qur'an uses profound stories and narratives to instil this understanding in the readers mind. Take for instance the story of Moses and Khidr,

"And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy from us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge. Moses said to him, "May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgement?" He said, "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience. And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?" [Moses] said, "You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order." He said, "Then if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I make to you about it mention." So they set out, until when they had embarked on the ship, Al-Khidr tore it open. [Moses] said, "Have you torn it open to drown its people? You have certainly done a grave thing." [Al-Khidr] said, "Did I not say that with me you would never be able to have patience?" [Moses] said, "Do not blame me for what I forgot and do not cover me in my matter with difficulty." So they set out, until when they met a boy, Al-Khidr killed him. [Moses] said, "Have you killed a pure soul for other than [having killed] a soul? You have certainly done a deplorable thing." [Al-Khidr] said, "Did

I not tell you that with me you would never be able to have patience?" [Moses] said, "If I should ask you about anything after this, then do not keep me as a companion. You have obtained from me an excuse." So they set out, until when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality. And they found therein a wall about to collapse, so Al-Khidr restored it. [Moses] said, "If you wished, you could have taken for it a payment." [Al-Khidr] said, "This is parting between me and you. I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience. As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So I intended to cause defect in it as there was after them a king who seized every [good] ship by force. And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief. So we intended that their Lord should substitute for them one better than him in purity and nearer to mercy. And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience." [46]

Commenting on the above verses the classical scholar Ibn Kathir explained that Khidr was the one who God have given knowledge of these realities and He did not give it to Moses. With reference to the statement "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience", Ibn Kathir writes that this means, "You will not be able to accompany with me when you see me doing things that go against your law, because I have knowledge from Allah that He has not taught you, and you have knowledge from Allah that He has not taught me." [47]

In essence God's wisdom and knowledge is unbounded and complete, whereas we as human beings have its particulars, in other words limited wisdom and knowledge. Hence Ibn Kathir explains that the verse "And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not" means,

"For I know that you will denounce me justifiably, but I have knowledge of Allah's wisdom and the hidden interests which I can see but you cannot." [48]

The view that everything that happens is in line with a Divine wisdom is empowering and positive. This is because God's wisdom does not contradict other aspects of His nature such as His perfection and goodness. Therefore all evil and suffering is ultimately part of a Divine good wise purpose. This evokes positive psychological responses from believers because in the end of all evil and suffering is for purpose that is wise and good. The 14th century classical scholar Ibn Taymiyya summarises this point,

"If God – exalted is He – is Creator of everything, He creates good and evil on account of the wise purpose that He has in that by virtue of which His action is good and perfect." [49]

Henri Laoust in his *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya*, also explains Ibn Taymiyya's position, "God is essentially providence. Evil is

without real existence in the world. All that God has willed can only conform to a sovereign justice and an infinite goodness, provided, however, that it is envisaged from the point of view of the totality and not from that of the fragmentary and imperfect knowledge that His creatures have of reality...”[50]

A sufficient response to the second assumption is to provide a strong argument that God has justified reasons to permit suffering and evil in the world. The intellectual richness of Islamic Theology provides us with many reasons, some of which include:

1. The primary purpose of the human being is not to enjoy a transitory sense of happiness, rather to achieve a deep internal peace through knowing and worshipping God. This fulfilment of the divine purpose will result in everlasting bliss and happiness. So if this is our primary purpose other aspects of human experience are secondary. The Qur’an, the book of the Muslims states: “I did not create either jinn or man except to worship Me.”[51]

2. God also created us for a test, and part of this test is to be tested with suffering and evil. The Qur’an mentions “The One Who created death and life, so that He may put you to test, to find out which of you is best in deeds: He is the all-Almighty, the all-Forgiving”.[52]

3. Having hardship and suffering enables us to realise and know God's attributes such as 'the Victorious' and 'the Healer'. For example without the pain and suffering of illness we would not appreciate the attribute of God being 'the Healer'. Knowing God is a greater good, and worth the experience of suffering or pain as it will mean the fulfilment of our primary purpose.

4. Suffering allows 2nd order good. 1st order good is physical pleasure and happiness and 1st order evil is physical pain and sadness. 2nd order goodness is elevated goodness such as courage. Courage is appreciated in the presence of cowardice.

5. God has given us free will, and free will includes choosing evil acts. This explain personal evil, which is evil or suffering committed by a human being. Once can argue that "why doesn't God give us the choice to do good or evil but always ensures that we choose good?" The problem here is that good and evil lose their meaning if God were to always ensure we chose good. Take the following example into consideration: someone always points a loaded gun to your head and asks you to give charity. You obviously give the charity, but does it have any moral value? It doesn't.

Alom is a courageous and inspirational writer. The way he expresses his love for his mother and the heartfelt experiences he encountered growing up is truly moving. However, his central reasons cited in this part of the review seem to not hold water under intellectual scrutiny. Some of the blame rests on the shoulders of the Muslims

community, and we must take lessons from this book to encourage us to form communities in line with Islamic ethics and its intellectual tradition.

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[4] <https://humanism.org.uk/about/our-aims/>

[5] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXncw5r7AKY>

[6] <http://www.hamzatzortzis.com/1723/post-debate-thoughts-is-religion-a-force-for-good/>

[7] <http://www.iera.org/events/the-big-debates/can-consciousness-be-best-explained-by-gods-existence-professor-peter-simons-and-hamza-tzortzis>

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[34] The Young Atheist’s Handbook. Biteback Publishing. 2012, pp. 59-60.

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- [42] Qur'an 2:214
- [43] Qur'an 2:286
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- [45] *Ibid* p. 49.
- [46] Qur'an 18:65-82
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- [52] Qur'an 67:2

Evidence of the Existence of God, and the Wisdom Behind His Creation

Source: <http://islamqa.info/>

Question:

A non Muslim friend of mine asked how I could prove the existence of God and why He has given us life, and what its purpose is. My answer did not satisfy him, please tell me what I should tell him?

Answer:

Praise be to Allah

My dear Muslim brother, your efforts to call people to Allah and explain the reality of Allah's existence make us very happy. Finding out about Allah is in tune with the sound fitrah (natural inclinations of man) and with sound reasoning. How many there are who, once the truth becomes clear to them, they hasten to submit to Allah (enter Islam). If each one of us was to do his duty towards his religion, a great deal of good would be achieved. So we congratulate you, our brother, for undertaking the mission of the Prophets and Messengers, and we give you glad tidings of the great reward which you are promised, as your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If Allah were to guide one man at your hands, that would be better for you than red camels." (al-Bukhaari, Muslim). "Red camels" are the best kind of camels.

Secondly:

With regard to proof of the existence of Allah, it is obvious to anyone who ponders the matter, and there is no need for a lengthy discussion. When we ponder the matter, we find that it is divided into three categories: instinctive evidence, tangible evidence and shar'i (revelatory) evidence. We will explain this to you further, insha Allah.

1 – Instinctive evidence:

Al-Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen said:

The instinctive evidence that God exists is the strongest of all evidence for those who are not led astray by the devils. Hence Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So set you (O Muhammad) your face towards the religion (of pure Islamic Monotheism) Haneef (worship none but Allah Alone). Allah’s Fitrah (i.e. Allah’s Islamic Monotheism) with which He has created mankind.” [30:30]

Man’s sound nature (fitrah) testifies to the existence of God and man cannot turn away from this unless the devils mislead him; whoever is misled by the devils may not recognize this evidence.” (From Sharh al-Safareeniyyah)

Every person feels inside himself that he has a Lord and Creator, and he feels that he is in need of Him; if some major calamity befalls him he turns his hands, eyes and heart towards the heavens, seeking help from his Lord.

2 – Tangible evidence:

This refers to the things that exist in this universe; we see around us things that exist, such as trees, rocks, mankind, the earth, the heavens, seas, rivers...

If it is asked: these things are so many – who created them and is taking care of them?

The answer is that if these things came into being by accident, spontaneously and with no cause, then there is no one who knows how they were created, and that is one possibility. But there is another possibility, which is that these things created themselves and are taking care of themselves. And there is a third possibility, which is that there is Someone Who created them. When we look at these three possibilities, we find that the first and the second are impossible. If we reject the first and the second, then the third must be the one which is correct, which is that these things have a Creator Who created them, and that Creator is Allah. This is what is stated in the Quran, where Allah says (what means):

“Were they created by nothing? Or were they themselves the creators?”

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no firm Belief.”

[52:35]

Moreover, when were these mighty things created? For all these years, who is it that has decreed that they should remain in this world and has granted them the means of abiding?

The answer is it is Allah who has given to each thing that which is suited to it and will guarantee its survival. Do you not see the beautiful green plants; when Allah cuts off their water supply, can they live? No, rather they become dry stalks. If you ponder all things you will find that they are dependent upon Allah. Were it not for Allah, nothing would remain.

And Allah has created everything to do that for which it is suited. So camels, for example, are for riding. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our Hands have created, the cattle, so that they are their owners.

And We have subdued them unto them so that some of them they have for riding and some they eat.” [36:71-72]

Look at the camel and how Allah has created it strong, with a strong back, so that it can be used for riding and it is able to endure harsh conditions which other animals cannot bear.

If you look at other creatures you will find that they are suited to the purposes for which they were created. Glory be to Allah.

Other examples of tangible evidence include the following:

When calamities befall people this points to the existence of the Creator, for example, when they call upon Allah and Allah responds to their prayer; this points to the existence of Allah. Al-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said: “When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed for rain, he said, ‘Allahumma aghithna, Allahumma aghithna (O Allah, send us rain, O Allah, send us rain).’ Then a cloud came and it started to rain before he had even come down from the minbar (pulpit). This points to the existence of the Creator.” (Sharh al-Safareeniyyah).

3 – Shar’i evidence:

All divinely-revealed laws point to the existence of Allah. Al-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said:

“All the divinely-revealed laws point to the existence of the Creator and to the perfect nature of His knowledge, wisdom and mercy, because these laws must have been prescribed by someone, and that Lawgiver is Allah.” (From Sharh al-Safareeniyyah).

With regard to your question: Why did Allah create us?

The answer is: so that we would worship Him, thank Him and remember Him, and do that which He has commanded us. You know that among mankind there are disbelievers and there are Muslims. This is because Allah wants to test His slaves as to whether they will worship Him or worship others. That is after Allah has showed the way to everyone. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Who has created death and life that He may test you which of you is best in deed.”
[67:2]

“And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone).” [51:56]

We ask Allah to enable us and you to do that which He loves and is pleased with, and to do more da'wah (propagation) and work for the sake of His religion.

May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad.

And Allah knows best.

Question about existence of God

Source: <http://www.onislam.net/>

Question:

Salam. I have some questions about God. First, how can we convince an atheist that there is God? If you say that the universe and our existence are proofs that God created us, then the atheist would say that there are many theories of the universe and our existence. My atheist friend says that quantum physicist says that the universe does not need any cause to come into existence. Also, other scientists say our existence came through evolution. Second, how can we convince an atheist that there is only One God? There is a possibility that order and harmony between universe and our existence may also come through many gods, my atheist friend says. So why deny such possibility and stick to One God? Thanks.

Answer:

Thank you very much for your question and for contacting “Ask About Islam”.

Let us first differentiate between theories and scientific facts. While the former are based on human assumptions (and often prejudices), the latter should be based on tangible evidence and rational proofs.

Modern science has brought an end to the atheist dogma that influenced the minds, souls, and societies in the 19th and most of the 20th centuries. Many assumptive theories were falsely cloaked in the robes of science, and brought forward to replace the sound faith in God with atheist dogmas.

Yet such dogmas as Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudianism — among others — have all collapsed and faded away, when subjected to the true test of scientific evidence and reasoning. The weakness of these atheist theories lies in their being based on the atheist precepts and inclinations of their founders, rather on any true evidence.

Extra confidence in one's own assumptions have led the founders of such theories to ignore a basic axiom of real science: to build conclusions on tangible proofs, not on assumptions and conjectures.

In fact, human perception and physical knowledge are limited, due to the narrow range of our senses. The scope of the unseen, the unheard, the unsmelled, and the unfelt is much more wider than what our senses allow. Besides, the capacity of human intellect is limited to the ability to observe, analyze, correlate, and understand the relations and laws governing the physical, chemical, and biological phenomena.

Yet human perception is totally unfit to answer the big question: WHY any component or system of this world, or our own body or soul, acts or behaves the way it does. Any human can never change, influence, or force anything in nature to act differently or to deviate from its predestined course.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to pay attention to what a reasonable and honest reading of the physical world tells us about God. Read through the "book of nature" at any level — from the smallest subatomic particles to the single living cells, to the complex biological systems of plant, animal, or human life. You may also observe the universe at large: from our planet earth, to the solar and the galactic systems! God is always there, everywhere: the Creator and Fashioner God, Who is Ever-Knowing and Wise, and is Ever-Living and Sustainer.

He is manifest everywhere through His unique capacity to:

1. Initiate: to create matter from nothingness
2. Determine: to determine such unlimited diversity of matter, species, and systems
3. Design: to let each of His creations have its own features and to follow exactly His predestined laws
4. Harmonize: to operate all systems — physical, chemical, and biological — and balance them in a harmoniously integrated fashion
5. Sustain: to maintain, all the time, all matter existing and functioning in the same predesigned way

Now, back to your question; how to prove these manifest attributes? In fact, a negative answer to each of the following queries would give the proof!

You can follow these arguments:

- **Initiation:** Could one argue with the ability of God alone to initiate every bit of matter? Or could matter create itself from nothing, or come to existence by an infinitesimally probable chance?
 - **Determination:** Could chance alone produce such overwhelming diversity of chemical structures, biological species, and humankind? Could the diversity of the chemical elements in the periodic table, composed of the same subatomic particles, be the result of electrons, protons, and neutrons deciding for themselves to arrange these ways? From these elements, could the vast chemical and biochemical ones emerge by chaotic hits of chance?
 - **Design:** Could one believe that each and every of the multitude of life systems would decide to function the unique and complex fashions they do, fashions that are much more complex and more precise than huge modern chemical plants? Could the unique genetic "software" implanted in each living cell be self-invented by the components of their DNAs?
 - **Harmony:** Could the overall ecological balance between the biota, atmosphere, earth, and sea — which maintains biological diversity and environmental sustainability — be the product of nature's global "self-accord"?
 - **Sustenance:** Could physical matter, at any level of complexity, deviate from the laws governing and maintaining its existence, properties, and behavior?
- As the rational answer to each of these five questions is a definite NO, then the inevitable clear truth emerges: This universe could only be the creation of One Initiator God, by His determination, according to His super design, such as to follow His laws, and to collectively function in harmony according to a single sustained pattern, with no single deviation or disparity.

This same rationale that tells about the One Ever-Living Creator, Who is Ever-Sustainer and Hegemonic over all creation, similarly refutes those baseless illusions regarding polytheistic gods, whether they were imagined by primitive man or invented by philosophers, all alike.

Throughout history, polytheism took several forms: from the primitive idol gods of ancient Egypt and Greece, to the present Christian and Hindu trinities, which are regarded as polytheism by Islam. They all fell into the same problem. In other words, the transcendental nature of the Divine in Islam does not accept any other nature of

this Divine. Monotheism in Islam means the One and Only God. He is not only one in number, but also in nature. And it is against His monotheistic entity to have Him reflected through different or variable natures, as takes place with other religions.

In his renowned 2001 book, *The Hidden Face of God – How Science Reveals the Ultimate Truth*, Gerald Schroeder admits that "a single consciousness, a universal wisdom, pervades the universe. ... All existence is the experience of this wisdom." He adds that "every particle, every being, from atom to human, appears to represent a level of information, of wisdom." To find an answer to the puzzle from where this information arises, Schroeder concludes that "wisdom, information, and an idea, is the link between the metaphysical creating force and the physical creation. It is the 'hidden' face of God."

It took the atheists 14 centuries to rediscover (not discover) these basic facts — facts that the Qur'an, the eternal word of God, has so repeatedly declared and manifestly expounded. Please go back to the Noble Qur'an and read it. You will find endless verses explaining and emphasizing what was mentioned above.

I hope this answer satisfies you. If you have any other queries, please don't hesitate to write to us again. Thank you and keep in touch.