

DOES GOD EXIT?

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DOES GOD EXIST?

By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

**"The thing a man does particularly lay to heart and know for certain concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him and certainly determines all the rest. That is his outlook on life."**

—CARLYLE.

Carlyle rightly points out that outlook on life is of prime and paramount importance. You cannot live a well-deserved life, unless you know what life is and what is the nature of the Universe. Is it a fortuitous collection of atoms or is it the embodiment of design and plan? Is there any noble purpose running through the whole fibre of the Universe or is it all haphazard and meaningless? Is man a distinct moral creature, destined to live a life full of meaning and endowed with purpose or is he just a little beast masquerading as "human"? In short are life and Universe mere accidents or are they the design and creation of an All-knowing, All-powerful Creator.

This is the most important and the most fundamental problem of existence. Without a proper and correct explanation of this, mankind cannot take a single step in the right direction.

Two explanations have been put forward. The first is that the Universe has been created by an omniscient and omnipotent God. It is the manifestation of His Design. He planned life according to it. He created man and gave him the Code of Conduct. He controls the Universe. He alone is the King, the Author of the Universe. This view is held by Islam.

The other view was most vehemently put forward in the post-Renaissance period in Europe. Particularly the scientists and the philosophers of the 18th and 19th century propounded this so-called scientific explanation that we know of no God or the like. The Universe is a chance product, an accident. It dashed into existence just by itself. Its beauty owes itself to no Designer. Its harmony speaks of no Planner. Its law and order are not the manifestation of any Will. Earth existed prior to man. In the wake of time, matter attained consciousness all by itself. Life developed on this planet and the process of evolution held the sway. Amoebas became birds, fishes and reptiles. Apes and chimpanzees became men. Man is only now master of destiny. We know of no God, because we cannot scientifically (i.e., by Experiment and Observation) assess His existence.\*

This "scientific" view of the Universe was put forward by the 18th century scientists. But now a revolution in the scientific thought itself seems to have taken place. Now it is dawning on Europe's

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\* This view is held by materialists of all hue and colour, whether Communists or otherwise. Thus, for instance, see Haeckel's Riddle of the Universe, Will's Autobiography, Herbert Spencer's System of Synthetic Philosophy, Engel's Anti-Duhring, Marx's Theses on Feuerbach and Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Bertrand Russell's The Scientific Outlook and Scientific and Religion are also helpful in understanding this viewpoint.

intellectual horizon that the 18th century explanation of the mysteries of life is incompatible with the reality. The hope entertained by earlier scientists that they had discovered the key to the riddle of life has fallen to the ground. Prof. Joad says:

"The 19th century view seems to have been that we were within reasonable distance of attaining a complete understanding of man and the Universe. It is only now that we are coming to realise our ignorance of both. Most of the knowledge previously obtained is seen to be misleading and where the old methods have failed, there is a willingness to experiment with new ones." (Guide to Modern Thought, p. 25. Italics are my own).

It is now increasingly realised that the so-called scientific explanation was most unscientific. It was a departure from science itself. Science employs the methods of observation and experiment. The view that this or that might, have happened before man attained consciousness is a mere speculation, a guess and a hypothesis and not a scientific fact. It is unsupported by any positive proof. How can we ascertain that such and such happened and existed prior to man, when there was no human being to observe its occurrence? An observation presupposes the existence of an observer. But here we have an observation without an observer! Could anything be more absurd, illogical and unscientific.

The whole of the so-called scientific explanation is, at best, an indirect inference from certain fossils, signs and other remains of that period. But if indirect inference, as distinct from direct observation and experiment, can be taken as a reliable source of knowledge, then the belief in the existence of a Creator transcending the material Universe and all its contents is most firmly grounded in reason and scientific knowledge. How can one who observes the inexhaustible creativity of nature, its purposefulness, its conscious selectiveness, its preservation of that which is morally useful and destruction of that which is socially injurious fail to draw that behind nature lives an All-pervading Self-conscious Mind of whose incessant creative activity the processes of nature are but outward manifestations? The Universe gives abundant proof of the Mind behind it and the Will governing its activity. The stars scattered through almost infinite space, the vast panorama of nature with charm and beauty sterling into hearts, the planned waxing and waning of the moon, the well-ordered rise and glow of the sun, the astonishing harmony of the seasons and the days and the nights, the incessant supply of water, the delicate flowers and crystals beneath our feet,—all point towards one fact: "There is a-God, the Creator, the Governor". We witness a superb plan in the Universe;—can it be without a Planner? We see great beauty and harmony in its working;—can they be without a Creator? We observe wonderful design in nature;—can it be without a Designer? We feel lofty purpose in physical and human existence;—can it be without a Will working behind it? We find that the Universe is like a superbly written fascinating Novel;—can it be without an Author? Truly:

"The human brain is a poor instrument to solve such ultimate problems. We have to recognise its limitations. Yet it perceives how well-ordered all things are, and how wonderful are the inventions of nature. Design is manifest everywhere. Whether we are laymen or scientists, we must postulate

a Lord of the Universe—give Him what shape we will." (Sir Arthur Keith, the famous scientist and anthropologist, in "1 Believe", p. 155.)

This fact is now increasingly realised in Europe too. Scientists have begun to realise their limitations. They are reverting to the other explanation of the Universe. The famous historian Arnold J. Toynbee says:

"Man has been very clever in gaining control over nature. But he is very backward in learning to control himself."

And that:

"The great need of the modern world is a rebirth of supernatural belief. Without it, man... unregenerate man. .. is hardly to be trusted with the dangerous toys his laboratories have hatched."

The omnipotence of science has fallen to the ground. The foundations of Western thought have been shaken. Those who talked of Materialism now think in terms of "scepticism". Those who laughed at the concept of God now say, "God is the meaning of human existence." (Nicolas Berdyrev). Even the most die-hard materialists cannot say that belief in God is unscientific. Rather, the scientists present treatises with the object to:

"examine critically the scientific capital accumulated by man and derive there from logical rational consequences" and to show that "these consequences lead inevitably to the idea of God." (Dr. Lecomte de Novy: "The Human Destiny")

J.W.N. Sullivan interviewed a number of eminent scientists and wrote:

"In the new Universe, it appears, our religious insight is granted as great validity as our scientific insight. Indeed in the opinion of the greatest creator of them all (Albert, Einstein) our religious insight is the source and guide of our scientific insight." (Observer, 13th April, 1930.)

Prof. C.E.M. Jo ad remarks:

"Science in fact has cleared the boards of the Universe for religion, but it has no contribution to the writing of the play. It must be written by religion," ( Guide to modern Thought, p. 117).

In this context, the views of the most eminent scientists of this age may also interest the reader:

"20<sup>th</sup> century Physics, it was stated in the books of Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, had revolutionised the 19<sup>th</sup> century conception of the physical universe, and the revolution, it appeared, is friendly to religion. Science and religion now pointed to the same kind of Universe and taught, albeit by different methods, the same truths. Science had even re-established God." (Prof.

C.E.M. Joad: "God and Evil", p. 140. For a discussion see "Philosophy of Religion" by Prof: Fulton J. Sheen.)

The discussion brings us to the definite conclusion that the Universe and man owe their existence to God who alone is All-powerful, the King, the Creator. The words of the Holy Quran automatically flow out from our hearts:

"O Mankind! Worship your Lord, Who hath created you and those before you so that ye may ward off (evil), (and) Who hath appointed the earth a resting-place for you and the sky a canopy, and causeth water to pour down from the Heavens, thereby producing fruits as food for you. And do not set up rivals to ALLAH, while ye know."

**(Surah II: 21, 22)**

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