

Belief in God

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Humans are a creation. The discourse of religion commences with the realization of this fact. This is an existential reality observable directly by us whenever we wish. Thus, we know from which lifeless elements human creation occurs. These elements are ingested through food, and we know where and how they are processed inside the human body, which acts as a factory. We are aware that these elements do not contain human sperm nor anything that transforms matter into life and life into consciousness. Yet, this food, when it reaches a certain location, transforms into semen, which contains the seeds capable of forming a human. These seeds, in the millions, are found in the semen released by a man at one time. Each of these seeds has the potential to join with a woman's ovum and develop into a complete human, a process that occurs in another kind of factory. We can see that when it joins with the ovum, the initial form that comes into existence is so tiny it cannot be seen without a microscope. Yet, this insignificant entity, over nine months and a few days, transforms from a drop of water into a clot, from a clot into flesh, then flesh onto bones, and with flesh-covered bones, emerges from the mother's womb as something entirely different, to display its amazing powers and capabilities in knowledge and reasoning, intellect and wisdom, art and craft, the excellence of which can be seen everywhere in the world today.

We observe creation and, due to the inherent structure of our consciousness, find ourselves compelled to seek its creator. This inclination arises not simply because every entity must have a creator, but because every act of creation necessitates a creator. This fundamental aspect of creation drives our search. Embedded within us is this urge; thus, we are never truly satisfied with ceasing our quest to understand the cause behind an effect and the agent behind an action. Upon examining the great thinkers in philosophy, science, and mysticism, it becomes apparent that none have been able to forsake this pursuit. Consequently, the entire chronicle of knowledge serves as evidence to the fact that every creation has a creator; humanity, being a creation, therefore has a Creator. Furthermore, the act of creation we witness is deliberate, with each facet showcasing immense power, and unparalleled knowledge and wisdom. Just as we cannot dismiss the act of creation, we cannot overlook the nature of this action. For the nature of this act stands as a reality of existence, just as the act of creation itself does. As we behold the act, we also perceive this truth, thereby recognizing that the creator of humanity possesses purposeful intent, boundless power, and profound wisdom.

Human intellect leads us up to this point. In this journey, it requires no external guidance. The capacity for knowledge and perception granted to humans at birth is sufficient for guidance in this journey. Yet, beyond this point, the question of who the creator is cannot be resolved with equal certainty and conviction. Typically, the human intellect contemplates the two responses that have been offered throughout human history, either selecting one or remaining undecided.

The first answer posits that the universe, in whose embrace humans awaken to consciousness, is their creator. This is the perspective of atheism.

Typically, this viewpoint is articulated as follows: The universe is endowed with self-consciousness, embodying a power that inherently possesses creative capabilities. Beyond it, nothing else exists. The concepts of "inside" and "outside" are also confined within its bounds. Each segment of the universe harbors both an internal and external existence. While the universe operates as a nexus of causes and effects, in its totality, it is regarded as the initial cause.

This answer is merely a claim.

First, the purported self-awareness of the universe has never been substantiated through observation. We understand the universe's essence to be matter, and matter lacks intent, as well as knowledge and intellect. If such attributes exist, they are observed in the entity referred to as the creator of this universe. Moreover, if such a power exists, it resides in the very creation, without which concepts like knowledge, intellect, and purpose would be devoid of meaning.

Second, what is perceived as the manifestation of creative power in the universe is actually just the display of characteristics and effects attributable to an entity. This type of power manifestation is evident in the components of automated machinery designed by humans and in artificial intelligence, which currently astounds us with its level of sophistication.

Third, if the universe embodies anything, it represents the aggregate of effects and characteristics that forge causal relationships. It bears no relation to the creative act that necessitates knowledge, intellect, purpose, and the capability to act at each juncture. This realm is governed by causes and effects, methodologies, and laws, without embodying deeper significance.

Who is the creator of humanity? This question has received its second answer from those who identify themselves as prophets. This profound response was imparted to humanity at the time of their creation. Therefore, the first human was not only humanity's initial member but also its inaugural prophet. This answer reveals that the creator of humanity is a knowledgeable and wise entity, transcending the confines of our universe.

Human creation commenced from the depths of the earth. The very elements found in soil, which enter our bodies as food and transform into a simple extract of water, marking the commencement of our journey to becoming human, had already undergone a similar process within decayed clay. This process continued until the creation reached completion, at which point the clay dried from the surface and became a hardened mud. Upon breaking, it revealed a living creature, representing the primal form of human existence.

Subsequently, the same transformation observed within the earth started to unfold within this rudimentary animal, which initially lacked knowledge and perception. Through the interbreeding of several generations, which refined this primal form of human existence, it gradually evolved to a state ready to receive a human personality. This personality was bestowed through a gentle breath, marking the final step in the creation of humanity as we understand it:

بَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ، ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ، ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِهِ، وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ □ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ.

[It is He] Who has excelled in the creation of everything. He began creating a human being from clay; then carried on his progeny from an insignificant fluid; then perfected it and blew into it from His spirit and for you made ears [for hearing], eyes [for seeing] and hearts [for understanding] – seldom are you grateful.

(Al Sajdah 32: 7-9)

This response was last provided through the Quran, the verses of which are quoted above. The prophet who delivered this message asserts that these are the words of the Creator Himself, revealed to him. As these revelations were received, he recited them to the people without any modifications. Not a single letter or detail was altered by him, nor will anyone dare to make changes until the Day of Judgment.

This assertion is made within the Quran itself, and a very clear criterion has been established therein. This criterion allows us to determine whether the Quran genuinely represents the word of the Creator or if it has been mistakenly or falsely attributed to the Creator by a human being.

What is this criterion? We can present it in the following three points:

Firstly, the process of human knowledge creation, encompassing both words and meanings, invariably involves numerous stages of trial and error. No individual is born with the innate wisdom of philosophers like Socrates or Plato, nor with the poetic genius of Ghalib or Shakespeare, nor yet with the scientific brilliance of Newton or Einstein. This learning journey is marked by a constant cycle of understanding, making mistakes, and then rectifying those errors. We witness how individuals draw from the works of their predecessors, diligently hone their skills, and gradually progress until they reach the zenith of their craft, producing masterpieces of knowledge or literature. This progression is a fundamental aspect of the human condition, inherent from birth. Throughout the annals of knowledge and literature, there has never been a deviation from this pattern, nor is such an exception anticipated in the future.

However, the Quran stands as a notable exception to this universal rule. The individual through whom it was revealed was observed by his community day and night for forty years in a modest village comprising a few hundred dwellings. Throughout these years, his every action was visible to them, yet they never detected any indication of the customary trial and error process that is the lot of every human being. It was, therefore, astounding to them that this man, known in their midst for his truthfulness and trustworthiness, could have conceived such profound knowledge and articulate discourse on his own. Baffled, they speculated that perhaps his revelations were the work of a learned foreigner feeding him information. In response to such allegations, the Quran itself addresses this skepticism and provides clarification:

قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ، فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ، أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ؟ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ، إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ.

Say: Had God willed, I would neither have recited this Qur'an to you nor would God have informed you of it. It is His decision alone because I have spent a whole life among you before this. [When have I uttered such words?] Then, do you not use your intellect? So, who will be more unjust than the person who imputes falsehood to God or denies His revelation? In reality, such wrongdoers shall never succeed.

(Surah Yunus 10:16-17)

The point was that, 'O fools, when have you ever seen me engrossed in such discussions, expressing thoughts and ideas about them, engaged in practicing and refining them, or acquiring any knowledge or art related to the subjects now being discussed in the verses of the Quran? For forty years, I have lived among you; have you ever detected anything in my words and actions that could hint at the message I am now conveying? Have you observed any signs of the development and evolution of what I proclaim today in my previous life stages? You are aware that the human mind cannot produce something at any life stage without evidence of its development and evolution in earlier phases. You accuse me of lying about God. Have you ever noticed the slightest inclination towards dishonesty, deceit, forgery, or cunningness in my behavior and demeanor? Until this moment, you have acknowledged me as truthful and trustworthy. How, then, can you suddenly declare that the same person has become a liar and a fabricator overnight? O servants of God, why do you not apply your intellect?'

Secondly, human knowledge is invariably marred by contradictions. The narrative of 'I crafted, I admired, I broke' initiated from day one persists till the end. This, upon reflection, is a manifestation of the aforementioned process of trial and error. Moreover, should this knowledge transform into literature, the same pattern emerges. Examining his works closely reveals variances in poetry, eloquence, and meanings. At times, his speech may seem a marvel of expression, yet at others, it appears insignificant, even trivial. Hence, it is undeniable that no human has ever been capable of consistently delivering speeches of unparalleled eloquence on a multitude of topics and under varying circumstances, such that when these speeches are gathered from beginning to end, they compile into a coherent and cohesive collection without any ideological conflicts, devoid of the speaker's fluctuating emotions and psychological states, and free from shifts in opinions or perspectives.

The exception to this is solely the Quran. It is thus proclaimed:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا.

[Why are they hesitant about your prophethood?] Then, do these people not ponder on the Qur'an? Had it been from someone other than God, they would have found in it many contradictions.

(Surah An-Nisa 4:82)

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

"...Every aspect of the Quran, in its principles and branches, is so firm and interconnected that even the formulas of mathematics and Euclidean geometry cannot match its solidity and coherence. The beliefs it teaches are so intricately linked that removing even one would disrupt the entire chain. The acts of worship and obedience it commands spring from these beliefs as branches sprout from a trunk; the actions and ethics it advocates emerge from its principles as naturally as the inherent properties of an object manifest themselves; the system of life that emerges from its collective teachings is like a well-built edifice, each brick so firmly joined to the others that removing any one would create a void in the entire structure."

(Tadabbur-e-Quran 2/347)

Thirdly, no human knowledge is ever purely truth. There is always some admixture of falsehood with truth. Hence, no person departs from this world without the errors in their knowledge, information, inferences, and assumptions beginning to emerge. This is the inevitable outcome for every thinker, whether it be Socrates or Plato, Newton or Einstein. No deviation from this pattern has been recorded in the entire annals of knowledge and literature. However, the Quran stands as a remarkable exception. For nearly fifteen hundred years, it has withstood rigorous examination, yet no philosopher, sage, or scientist has succeeded in disproving any of its assertions or discrediting any of its teachings. In the past three centuries, despite significant advancements, not a single discovery has contradicted the truths the Quran presents; no scientific development has challenged its knowledge, and no experiment or observation has undermined the guidance it provides. What it proclaims as truth has never been found false, and what it identifies as falsehood has never been validated as true. These are incontrovertible truths concerning the Quran. It is stated:

وَإِنَّهُ لَكُنُوبٌ عَزِيزٌ، لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ، وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ، تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ.

Evil can neither enter it from its front nor from its behind. It is revealed in a very thorough manner from the Being Who is an embodiment of wisdom; has praiseworthy attributes.

(Ha Mim As Sajdah 41:42)

The Quran has informed humanity, after proving its own truthfulness by this standard, that the universe you mistakenly believe to be your creator is also a creation of the One who is your Creator. Do you not see that everything in this world is a miraculous manifestation of the art of creation, deep in meaning, meticulously arranged, full of wisdom, planning, benefit, and astonishing order and harmony, incredibly appropriate and in perfect harmony, unparalleled in its Euclidean and mathematical perfection, with no explanation other than that it has also been created by the All-Knowing, All-Wise who created you. He is the One who made the earth a cradle for you and the mountains its pegs, created you in pairs, made your sleep a source of rest, the night a cover, and the day the time for livelihood, created seven firm heavens above you and placed a burning lamp within them. He is the One who sends down rain from the clouds and produces with it vegetation, crops, and dense gardens:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ، عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ، هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ، هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ، الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ. هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ، لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى، يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.

[They should always keep in mind that] it is God besides whom there is no deity. Knower of the Unseen and the Seen; He is the Most Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful. He is the very God besides whom there is no deity, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy, the Embodiment of Peace, the Giver of Tranquility, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Extremely Powerful, the Most High; exalted is God above what they state as partners! He is God, the Designer, the Creator, the Shaper. All good names are His. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

(Al-Hashr 59: 22-24)

The Quran has stated that acknowledging the lordship of this Creator is something that has been innately placed in human nature from time immemorial. It describes this matter as a covenant and pact, referring to it as an actual event. Man has been sent to this world for a test, hence this event has been erased from his memory, but its truth is etched on the page of his heart and ingrained in the recesses of his mind, immune to obliteration. When external influences do not interfere, and when reminded of this primal covenant, humans are instinctively drawn to it. This attraction is as natural as a child's instinctive rush to its mother, despite never having witnessed its own birth. This acknowledgment of the Creator satisfies a fundamental human need, aligning with the psychological requirements of the individual. The Quran articulates that this deep-seated acknowledgment is so profound that, concerning the Lordship of God, every person stands accountable before God based solely on this inner testimony. It is said:

وَأَذْأَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ، أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ؟ قَالُوا: بَلَىٰ، شَهِدْنَا □ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ. أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ، وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ، أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ؟ وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصِّلُ الْأَيَاتِ، وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ.

[O Prophet!] Remind them of that time too when your Lord had brought forth from the loins of Adam's children their progeny and had made them testify to themselves. [He had asked:] "Am I not your Lord?" They replied: "Yes, [You alone are our Lord.] We bear witness to it. This We did lest you should say on the Day of Judgement: "We had no knowledge of this," or present this excuse: "Our forefathers had already adopted polytheism and we later became their children; then, will You destroy us on account of what these wrongdoers did?" In this way, We explain Our revelations so that people are left with no excuse to deny the truth and so that they may return to the right path.

(Al-A'raf 7:172-174)

This acknowledgment forms the essence of the universe. It satisfies the human intellect and enlightens the heart. Thus, one might exclaim with conviction, "Without a doubt, Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.":

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوتٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ، الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ، الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ، يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبْرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ، لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ، يَكَادُ رَبُّهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ، نُورٌ عَلَيَّ نُورٌ، يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ، وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ، وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.

[The parable is that] God is the light of the heavens and the earth. [In the heart of a person,] the example of this light of His is as if there is a niche which has a lamp. The lamp is in crystal. The crystal is such as if it is a shining star. It is lit up by oil that comes from a lush olive tree which is neither eastern nor western. Its oil is [so transparent] as if it will light up even without fire touching it. Light upon light. God grants this light of His guidance to whomsoever He wills. God mentions these parables to guide people and God is aware of everything.

(An-Nur 24:35)

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

"...This universe, indeed the entire cosmos, is a world of darkness, a city of blindness, for those who do not believe in God or who believe in Him but do not accept His attributes and their implications. Such a person cannot know where this world came from nor can they understand the ultimate purpose and goal of its existence. They are unable to determine their own purpose of existence: Are they free and unbridled, or bound and subdued? Are they accountable or not? What is good for them and what is evil? Should they choose a path of injustice or justice? Should they follow solely their own interests and desires, or aim for a higher purpose? The correct answers to these questions are crucial for a successful and righteous life. However, one who does not believe in God cannot find the correct solutions to these questions. They wander like a blind buffalo in darkness, ultimately falling into the abyss of destruction, reaping the consequences of their deeds. On the other hand, one who believes in God with His true attributes finds both the essence of the universe and its ultimate end becomes clear to them. The answers to all those questions, which are unsolvable for the disbeliever, become evident to them. Thus, the world no longer remains a place of darkness for them; instead, every aspect of it shines brightly with the light of faith, and every direction is illuminated for them. Every step they take is in full daylight, and the light of faith in God guides them in every direction. This reality is clearly stated in this passage: the light of the heavens and the earth is Allah. One who has this light is in brightness and on the straight path, while one who is deprived of this light wanders in a realm of darkness, and no one else can provide them light. 'And whomsoever Allah does not grant light, for him there is no light.'"

(Tadabbur-e-Quran 5/409)