



THE INCOHERENCE OF ATHEISM

Why belief in God is both natural and rational

Abdullah Ibn Salih Al-Ujayri

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‘Abdullāh ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Ujayrī



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INTRODUCTION

All praise is for Allah, Lord of the Worlds. May benediction and peace be upon the most honoured of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and all his Companions.

One of the loveliest moments in my life was when I presented the first draft of my book as a gift to my beloved parents. With this new book, I found happiness and pleasure in their words and observations. In reality, my efforts are their efforts, as a child is but an extension of its parents. I say this to point out Allah’s favour upon me. Much of my intellectual output would not have happened were it not for their support, encouragement, and supervision. I ask Allah to honour me with their pleasure, and that He increases their age in good deeds. Involving them with every book I have written has been a habit of mine. There was an exception though. Its topic and title evoked a pushback from my parents. It was a pushback that was coloured with surprise and an indignation of sorts. Their surprise was spurred by the fire of faith that burned in them, and the denunciation of a dangerous pattern of theological deviance. It was as if they were saying, ‘What is it that landed our son in this maze?’ That book was *The Atheist Militia*.

This situation reminded me of a story. A leading scholar of dialectic theology (*kalām*) was walking along a path, followed by dozens of students. An elderly woman asked, ‘Who is this?’ It was put to her, ‘Do you really not know? This is the man who has put forth a thousand proofs for the existence of Allah!’ She said, ‘My son, if he was not afflicted by a thousand doubts, he would not have been in need for a thousand proofs!’ When her words were related back to the scholar, he said, ‘O Allah, I ask for faith in You like that of elderly women.’¹

¹ This story is commonly attributed to Rāzī, though I have been unable to reliably source it. I have mentioned it only for the lesson it offers, and to point out that it bears a considerable amount of truth: it reminds people of the innate nature of knowing Allah ﷻ and the fact that it is not in need of specific evidence, especially for those whose *fiṭrah* remains unblemished.

On Rāzī’s entry in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Lisān al-Mīzān* (6/319), it reads: ‘Though he was deeply proficient in the religious fundamentals, he used to say, “Whoever adheres to the faith of old women, he would be successful.”’ The religion of old women would be a praiseworthy trait only for those whose acquisition of faith can be achieved by way of *fiṭrah*.

In *Nafkh al-Ṭīb min Ghuṣn al-Andalus al-Raṭīb* (5/263), it says, ‘Fārābī (Alpharabius) used to frequently utter “O my Lord, to You I complain” so frequently that this could be found in many instances of his speech that were not exactly suited to it, thus leaving those unfamiliar with his style of speaking surprised. He ﷺ said, “I have been told that Fakhr (Rāzī) passed by a sufi shaykh. The shaykh was told, “This man can provide a thousand proofs for the Maker. Do you want to go over to him?” He said, “By His honour, had he truly known Him, he would never have attempted to prove Him in the first place.”’ This news reached the Imam (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī) – he said, “We know Him from behind the veil; they (i.e., sufis) see Him without any veil.”’ I do note some problems with the generalisations made here.

For the aforementioned reasons, right from the outset I am enthused to reveal to the reader that I fervently believe that recognising Allah ﷻ, acknowledging His oneness, and recognising our need for Him are deeply innate and natural human dispositions. It is this state that is most aligned with the nature of man, leading to inner peace and contentment. Without it, life would be without meaning, and many existential questions on humanity would remain unanswered. In fact, they would have no answer at all.

It seems that the firmness of this recognition and the influence it had on the soul is more sweeping than I first thought. Many years ago, I came across what I considered back then to be a surprising statement by Ibn Taymiyyah, where he discussed the existence of this natural predisposition of the soul in recognising the Divine, in conjunction with self-evident and rational positions. He states, ‘The core knowledge of the Divine is both natural and necessary. It is more firmly established in the souls than the fundamentals of mathematics such as “One is half of two”, or the fundamentals of natural knowledge such as “A body cannot simultaneously exist in two places”. This is because such items of knowledge are expressions that the innate predispositions of most people can disregard. As for the knowledge of the Divine, it is unimaginable that any natural predisposition is able to disregard it.’² When I first saw this passage, I asked myself, ‘Is the entrenchment of belief in the Divine stronger than these examples? I just cannot see it this way! Though I acknowledge that recognising Allah is innate to us, why is it that I do not feel that it is as strong as those self-evident examples?’

Some complexities of this issue were resolved for me a few years later. This was after the full publication of Ibn Taymiyyah’s encyclopaedic book *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, in which I came across an excellent passage where he discussed the belief of the innately understood highness of Allah ﷻ over His creation: ‘This knowledge clings onto their souls. It cannot be separated from it any more than the instinctive knowledge of tangibles and natural matters, such as “One is a third of three”, and “A body cannot simultaneously exist in two places”. This is because the latter is knowledge that they simply do not need; in fact, it may never even occur to a person. As for the knowledge of the highness of Allah, I would say that – in addition to people needing it – people are also in need of

Similar to this story is what Dhahabī ﷺ mentioned in his *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’* (22/112), in the biography of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā: ‘The prolific author Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī went to him. A jurist debated him at length on the cognition and monotheism of Allah. Then the two asked the shaykh on the science of cognition – he said, “This is irreversible knowledge that simply appears to souls.” Fakhr al-Dīn asked him, “How does one reach the station to attain it?” He said, “By abandoning the leadership and good fortune you are currently in.” He said, “This I cannot do. As for its substitutes – which I can – they are asceticism, seclusion, and the companionship of a shaykh.”’

The basic knowledge of Allah is imprinted onto the soul without exertion, as this is the *fiṭrah* upon which Allah created His servants.

² *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā*, 2/15.

what it necessitates and means, which is supplication, asking, self-effacement, and humility unto the Divine – the One Above Who is being invoked.’³

The knowledge-action duet vis-à-vis recognising the Divine is one aspect that represents the strength of this understanding, compared to those other non-actionable pieces of information that man may not always recollect as he grinds on with daily life. This is underscored by Ibn Taymiyyah on the next page: ‘As for knowing the Divine, it is far greater and more honourable, as it is necessary for the children of Adam in terms of both knowledge and intent to turn to Him. They were predisposed for this. The innate existence of this instinctive knowledge and intent is far more entrenched than the existence of other information.’⁴

In more explicit terms, he went on to say just a few pages later, ‘Allah, Glory to Him, predisposed His servants to two things: that their hearts affirm Him in terms of knowledge, and that they love Him and are humble in front of Him in terms of practice, worship, and seeking assistance. They are thus predisposed to having knowledge of Him and acting for His sake.’⁵ However, I was still puzzled as to what extent recognition of the Divine was entrenched in the soul. This was until I came across the following passage from Ibn Taymiyyah’s response: ‘It is known that the strength of attraction to disputed knowledge is unlike that attraction to unopposed knowledge. The attraction to knowledge of concepts like calculus or nature – such as “One is half of two”, “A body cannot simultaneously be in two places”, and so on – is not as entrenched in the hearts, nor is there any strong opposition to it.’⁶ And this is how it is. The various doubts that are raised against Allah – which can potentially cause man to turn away from or weaken his innate predisposition – are far more than objections against other sciences. One therefore might feel that the sciences are more self-evident than Allah. However, if people’s souls were pure and those external distractions were taken out of the equation, it would have most certainly been the case that knowing Allah would be far stronger and entrenched than the sciences.

From the viewpoint of the sequence analysis and cognitive construct, recognition of the Divine must be the most self-evident of all rational concepts. Without acknowledging Him, there would be no scope left to affirm any innate knowledge, to pass judgement on its instinctiveness, or to suggest that it is above and beyond the nature of the universe, matter, and man. The gateway to affirming any self-evident truth is to first believe in Allah ﷻ. Without this, it is impossible to construct a coherent philosophical outlook that affirms instinctive and innate concepts. Based on this, one can understand what Ibn al-Qayyim reported from his teacher, may Allah have mercy on both of them. He said, “How can you

³ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, 4/561.

⁴ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, 4/562.

⁵ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, 4/585.

⁶ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, 4/562.

demand proof for someone who Himself is proof for everything?” He (i.e., Ibn Taymiyyah) used to frequently mention this couplet:

“Nothing can be correct in the minds if the day requires proof.”⁷

Indeed, when we ask for proof of Allah, it is as if we are lighting candles during an already bright day. Such a scene would provoke laughter, would it not? However, what are we supposed to do when we have been forced into a situation to clarify this? A reader may ask, ‘Why the haste in discussing this issue here, in the introduction of the book? Why not defer the discussion to where it can be more appropriately discussed and where the details, explanation, and proofs can be properly presented?’

The motivation for this is to underscore the notion that any research on the existence of Allah ﷻ and offering up its most important evidence cannot be treated as an issue which a reader may even subconsciously deem to be contentious, or presume that it requires some lengthy discourse to prove its veracity. This is especially given that there are objections raised to it. Many people are duped into believing that offering up an issue for debate and subjecting it to critique weakens its conclusiveness, and that this process renders the issue into a point of legitimate debate.

Consider the state of many people vis-à-vis instinctive and self-evident matters of rationality. Look at what became of them when they were exposed to schools of cognitive philosophy, and how the very core and self-evident truths were shaken – all just because this issue became one of to-and-fro, like any other. After barging shoulders and engrossing myself with many of those philosophical debates, I want to share the conclusion I have deduced. It is not difficult to construct deviant assertions that cast doubt on self-evident and instinctive truths. If a person does not hold on to the self-evident nature of the issue being objected to, he will invariably fall into the type of scepticism that can undermine the foundation upon which a coherent and rational knowledge structure rests.

Take, for example, the statements on the external world made by philosophical idealism. At its extreme fringes, this philosophy asserts that ‘there is no objective reality to the external world; therefore, our knowledge is not a result or a reflection of the external world, but rather the starting point of knowledge is in our minds’. Such an assertion flies against what our hearts instinctively know. When we deal with the world, we deal with what we self-evidently believe has a real and objective reality. Therefore, we have an instinctive tendency to believe that objective realities have a standalone existence. That reality exists regardless of whether we are there to observe it or not. Would the proponents of a philosophy that denies self-evident truths be considered to be

⁷ *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (Dār al-‘Āshimah print), 1/298.

merely obstinate personalities, or is it actually the case that doubts managed to shake the foundations of their souls – foundations upon which the concept of self-evident realities can survive?

The starting point of their problem is that they conceptualise that our knowledge, in a nutshell, is the result of interaction between ourselves and the thoughts that swirl around in our heads. So when I look at something, the question is: Am I interacting with *the thought* of me looking at the said thing, or am I interacting with something that really does possess external existence? Their position implies that we cannot get to the bottom of this; in fact, we cannot verify this at all. It would be more like a dream; nay, it would be like a deep dream state in which we are living out our lives without ever realising that we are in fact dreaming. It is as if their position is represented in the famous American movie, *The Matrix*. This movie actually comprises of various theological and philosophical concepts, one of which is the view that everything we perceive is all just in our minds, and has nothing to do with an actual world. The movie purports that the entirety of humanity is living in a virtual world, manufactured by artificial intelligence (AI). This virtual world is given shape by the minds of humans that are tied into what is called the matrix, without the witnessed world ever having any external reality to it.

I was in a discussion with some youth who had been influenced by atheist discourse. They too were sceptical of innate and instinctive concepts. During the discussion, I said there was a cognitive impasse that disallowed any further discussion: ‘If I were to tell you that I am dreaming right now, how can you convince me that I am not dreaming? You cannot pinch me, hit me, or attempt to wake me up, as I can simply say that all of this is part of the dream. ‘The only solution for these cognitive objections is to submit to what man innately feels within himself, giving oneself up to the uncorrupted innate disposition in a direct and simple fashion, and relying on the accuracy of its ramifications. Without such submission, it is hard for any man to do away with such cognitive problems.’

That was just one example. By this, I wanted to underscore that merely coming across a differing view on our innate instincts does not negate them. Philosophical objections cannot automatically dismantle what we can innately feel. In the end, there is a degree of reliance on the self-evident and innate predisposition that is required to repel these doubts. Without holding on to these instinctive truths, we would fall into the trap of sophistry. If you were pinched and then asked, ‘Do you feel pain?’, your answer would be in the affirmative. But are you certain that other people feel the same when they are pinched, or are they faking it? Is merely asking them a reliable way of ascertaining the fact? Perhaps they are lying. How can we be so sure that they feel pain like you do?

Has the life that you have passed thus far actually occurred, with all the details that you can recollect? Or is it that you were merely found like this, just a few

moments ago, being laden with a store of memories about a past life you feel you have experienced, such that you have an overwhelming feeling that you did indeed live out this lengthy period?⁸ If this type of question is asked, how can you provide evidence for it without resorting to the innate predisposition you feel within yourself?

The point is this: Merely presenting an issue – in fact, merely offering objections and counterarguments to it – does not negate the necessary and instinctive nature of the issue. Many a time, we end up feeling our basic cognitive imprints and submit to what they tell us. Without this, we can never construct any cognition that can assist us in learning about ourselves or the world around us. One of the most beneficial thought experiments I have come across in this regard is the one conducted by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī رحمته الله, which he related in his book *Deliverance From Error*. In it, he discussed his sceptical approach. He says he had no way of being saved were it not that Allah chose to save him thanks to the light He placed in his heart. That light returned him to his inner balance, and through this, the cognitive value of self-evident truths was restored to him.

Explaining the states of this stage, and in an attempt to cast doubt on the tangible and necessary truths in order to arrive at their necessary nature, he says, ‘I then set myself earnestly to examine the notions we derive from the evidence of the senses and from sight in order to see if they could be called in question. The result of a careful examination was that my confidence in them was shaken. Our sight, for instance, perhaps the best practiced of all our senses, observes a shadow, and finding it apparently stationary pronounces it devoid of movement. Observation and experience, however, show subsequently that a shadow moves not suddenly, it is true, but gradually and imperceptibly, so that it is never really motionless. ‘Again, the eye sees a star and considers it as large as a piece of gold, but mathematical calculations prove, on the contrary, that it is larger than the Earth. These notions, and all others which the senses declare true, are subsequently contradicted and convicted of falsity in an irrefragable manner by the verdict of reason.’

‘Then I reflected in myself: “Since I cannot trust to the evidence of my senses, I must rely only on intellectual notions based on fundamental principles, such as the following axioms: ‘Ten is more than three’, ‘Affirmation and negation cannot coexist together’, ‘A thing cannot both be created and also existent from eternity, living and annihilated simultaneously, at once necessary and impossible’.” To this, the notions I derived from my senses made the following objections: “Who can guarantee you that you can trust to the evidence of reason more than to that of the senses? You believed in our testimony till it was contradicted by the verdict


⁸ Translator’s note: Following on from the author’s example of *The Matrix*, questions on implanted memories have been explored in movies like *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*.

of reason, otherwise you would have continued to believe it to this day. Well, perhaps, there is above reason another judge who, if he appeared, would convict reason of falsehood, just as reason has confuted us. And if such a third arbiter is not yet apparent, it does not follow that it does not exist.”

‘To this argument I remained some time without a reply; a reflection drawn from the phenomena of sleep deepened my doubt. “Do you not see”, I reflected, “that while asleep you assume your dreams to be indisputably real? Once awake, you recognise them for what they are: baseless chimeras. Who can assure you, then, of the reliability of notions which, when awake, you derive from the senses and from reason? In relation to your present state they may be real; but it is also possible that you may enter upon another state of being which will bear the same relation to your present state as this does to your condition when asleep. In that new sphere you will recognise that the conclusions of reason are only chimeras.”

‘This possible condition is perhaps that which the Sufis call “ecstasy” (*ḥāl*), that is to say, according to them, a state in which absorbed in themselves and in the suspension of sense-perceptions, they have visions beyond the reach of intellect. Perhaps Death is also that state, according to that saying of the prince of prophets: “Men are asleep; when they die, they wake up.” Our present life in relation to the future is perhaps only a dream, and man, once dead, will see things in direct opposition to those now before his eyes; he will then understand that word of the Qur’an, “Today we have removed the veil from thine eyes and thy sight is keen.”⁹ ‘Such thoughts as these threatened to shake my reason, and I sought to find an escape from them. But how? In order to disentangle the knot of this difficulty, a proof was necessary. Now, a proof must be based on primary assumptions, and it was precisely these of which I was in doubt. This unhappy state lasted about two months, during which I was, not, it is true, explicitly or by profession, but morally and essentially, a thorough-going sceptic.’

‘God at last deigned to heal me of this mental malady; my mind recovered sanity and equilibrium: the primary assumptions of reason recovered with me all their stringency and force. I owed my deliverance not to a concatenation of proofs and arguments, but to the light which God caused to penetrate into my heart – the light which illuminates the threshold of all knowledge. To suppose that certitude can be only based upon formal arguments is to limit the boundless mercy of God. Someone asked the Prophet the explanation of this passage in the Divine Book: “God opens to Islam the heart of him whom He chooses to direct.” “That is spoken”, replied the Prophet, “of the light which God sheds in the heart.” “And how can man recognise that light?” he was asked. “By his detachment from this

⁹ Ḥāfiẓ al-‘Irāqī said in his *Takhrīj* of the *Ihyā’*, ‘I have not found it raised (*marfū*). It is in fact only ascribed to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib .’ (4/28)

world of illusion and by a secret drawing toward the eternal world”, the Prophet replied.

‘On another occasion, he said: “God has created His creatures in darkness, and then has shed upon them his light.” It is by the help of this light that the search for truth must be carried on. As by His mercy this light descends from time to time among men, we must ceaselessly be on the watch for it. This is also corroborated by another saying of the Apostle: “God sends upon you, at certain times, breathings of His grace; be prepared for them.” ‘My object in this account is to make others understand with what earnestness we should search for truth, since it leads to results we never dreamed of. Primary assumptions need not be sought for, since they are always present in our minds; if we engage in such a search, we only find them persistently elude our grasp. But those who push their investigation beyond ordinary limits are safe from the suspicion of negligence in pursuing what is within their reach.’¹⁰ One may find a number of lessons and wisdoms in the conclusion of this passage.

I wanted to underscore these points at the beginning of this book. During my research into the issue of the Divine’s existence, I came to the conclusion that, without holding onto – or operating from – one’s innate predisposition, man has no prospect of salvation. Without the possibility of man knowing he is man, there is no guarantee for him to be safe from the smoke of chaos, nihilism, absurdity, or sophistry. Whenever a person relinquishes these facts, he will inevitably land himself in major cognitive and moral problems, which can lead to the death of his humanity. When Nietzsche claimed that God is dead, what he was actually claiming was that his own humanity inside him had died.

But why this book? And why write on the topic of Allah’s existence? Ever since I thought about writing on this subject, this question has continuously occupied my mind. But what original contribution can a writer offer given the array of ancient and modern works dealing with the subject, all of which have attempted to offer all sorts of proofs for Allah’s existence and repel any objection raised to it? My primary motivator for this was to present the intellectual material in a manner that appeals to the broadest possible audience of cultured individuals who have an interest in the modern theist-atheist debate, and to offer a general conceptualisation of its most salient aspects. Likewise, giving contemporary Islamic theological discourse a shot in the arm can refresh the debate and reveal new lines of discussion. These areas ought to be put up for consideration and solutions for them should be put forth. This book is not the end of the journey for this topic. Rather, it should be viewed as the harbinger of deeper and more constructive academic writings. I pray that other specialists can assume the mantle to take these discussions further.

¹⁰ *Deliverance From Error*, p. 48. (Translation taken from the published translation of the Arabic book)

So this is the central idea of the book. I hope it will achieve its aims without delving into the type of polemic that is detached from how atheism actually manifests itself today. The purpose is not to present or discuss the old theological or philosophical arguments used to establish Allah’s existence, such as the argument from the temporality of bodies, argument from composition, argument from special design, or the discussions surrounding these. Rather, the aim is to have a discussion that is aligned to the discourse occurring today. They are the types of discussions I have been having with some of today’s youth who have been impacted by atheist discourse. It is also the study of many of the doubts and objections raised by contemporary atheists. I should not hide from the readership that, personally speaking, I am highly enthusiastic about defending Sunni dialectic theology, and by what is recorded in the Sunni books and debates by Sunni scholars on this subject, especially the writings of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمته الله. However, I will try to curb my strong views in favour of Sunnism to offer material and ideas that I hope will be clear, easy to understand, refreshing, and beneficial to wider society.

I end this introduction by paying homage to my beloved wife and my beloved daughters – Munā, Fāṭimah, Shaykah, and Balsam – for their great sacrifices and patience that have allowed me to complete this research. May Allah grant them the best of rewards on my behalf. I thank Dr. Ibrāhīm al-Rammāḥ for reviewing the pre-publication draft, and for his excellent feedback – may Allah decree reward and recompense for him.

I ask Allah to grant us all the ability for good, and that He allow the truth to emanate from our hearts and tongues. He رحمته الله is the best requestee.

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Chapter 1

INTUITIVE COGNITION AND RATIONAL COGNITION

In theological discussions, the existence of Allah is an issue that's central, and highly consequential. It is the foundation upon which all theological discourses are based. In fact, it is the fundamental delineator. It is in its light that the entire theological outlook of a believer is set up – for himself, his life, and the world around him.

I would hope to believe the statement above is obvious, and that it is part and parcel of the self-evident theological assertions of theism that require no specific proof. Having faith in Allah ﷻ is the pivot, around which all the conceptualisations of a believer revolve. There is no religious concept that is void of this element. This is why there is no difference of opinion among the affiliates of Islam – from the ancients to the contemporaries – that recognising Allah and affirming His existence is the most important fundamental of faith. It precedes all other theological discussions. Without it, any other Islamic belief – such as the monotheism of Allah in worship and lordship, belief in the prophethood of the Prophet ﷺ, and belief that the Qur'an is Allah's Book – cannot be attained. Though the above consensus exists among Muslims, there is a difference in the nature of this affirmation, its source, and where it is positioned in the soul. Is the affirmation of Allah imprinted on the soul, or is it acquired knowledge that requires analysis of the evidence?

Let us look at how revelation dealt with this issue, what ancient Muslim scholars said about this, how man and his nature are constructed, and what we innately find in our own selves. We would find that the correct position is that knowledge of the Divine is innate. The recognition of the Creator ﷻ represents instinctive and imprinted information that is firmly entrenched in the soul. It is like other instinctive knowledge that does not require any proof. Yet, this innate predisposition can become corrupted and cause an imbalance in man's inner compass. In such a situation, analysis and proof would be required to *remind* man of that innate predisposition, not to *establish* it in him. 'Affirming the Maker is innately predisposed, instinctive, and self-evident. It is not predicated on analysis or evidence.'¹¹ However, 'even though it is instinctively known to those with

¹¹ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, 4/570.

uncorrupted predispositions, many people need analysis. Sometimes, man is not in need of it; in other occasions, he is'.¹²

So, even though admitting that 'the innate aspects of knowledge are gained when the predisposition is sound and uncorrupted, that predisposition can become corrupted and ill, leading it to see the truth as falsehood. An example of this is the body when it becomes ill – it might find that something sweet is sour, or it might suffer from double vision. Such instances would have to be treated to remove the illness'.¹³ Based on this, 'whosoever gains gnosis or faith...without analysis, it would not be incumbent on him to do so; for those who cannot do so, it would be incumbent on them'.¹⁴

Analysis and the ability to produce evidence for Allah's existence are not from the universal obligations, as knowledge of this can be achieved by the soul's intuition. However, it does become incumbent on man when the recognition of the Divine is absent from his innate predisposition. This process would be to remind the soul what its predisposition would have dictated. The obligation of analysis and evidence here would act as a mechanism to achieve the primary obligation of affirming the existence of Allah. It is, however, unsubstantiated to claim that analysis and evidence for Allah's existence is a universal obligation. Another false claim is that the first obligation on a religiously liable person is:

- to know of Allah's existence,
- to conduct analysis that leads to cognition,
- to have the intention to conduct analysis, or
- to be in two minds about Allah's existence before intending to conduct analysis.

Man can recognise the existence of Allah ﷻ via his innate predisposition. Whoever is afflicted by doubt in this regard must work to expel such uncertainties. The verified position in this regard is that which Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ mentioned: 'The first religious obligation can differ based on the variety of people's situations. What might be the first obligation on one person might not be so on another.'¹⁵ Likewise, restricting the ways of analysis to acquire knowledge to one or a few methods is incorrect. Any proper evidence that leads to this knowledge is legislated for anyone who requires it. The most such evidence can offer is to remind a person of his original predisposition. Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ says, 'As the ways of recognising and acknowledging Allah are varied, various groups of theologians adopted a method to ascertain knowledge of Him, believing that their

¹² *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/303.

¹³ *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/306.

¹⁴ *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/306. See also *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*, 5/246.

¹⁵ *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 8/16.

method was the only way. This is a gross error. It is a position not grounded in knowledge.’¹⁶

He adds: ‘There is no Messenger who, when he first called his people, said, “You are commanded to seek the recognition of the Creator, so conduct analysis and derive evidence for it so that you may recognise Him.” They were not made liable to first gain that recognition, nor were they made liable to access the evidence that led to that recognition. Their hearts already knew Him and affirmed Him. Every newborn is born upon the *fiṭrah* (innate and imprinted predisposition of the soul). However, this predisposition can be altered. When man is reminded, he is reminded of his predisposition. This is why Allah said to Mūsā, “Speak to him gently, so perhaps he may be mindful” of the knowledge that is in his *fiṭrah*, which will enable him to know his Lord, how He favoured him, how He was good to him, and how he is dependent on Him. That will invite him to faith.’¹⁷

Analysis and deriving evidence have an additional benefit as well. If executed in the proper religious manner, this can lead to greater faith and entrench the *fiṭrah* in the heart. Abū al-Muzaffar al-Sam‘ānī said, ‘We do not deny the type of analysis that is endorsed by the Qur’an and prophetic tradition, for this allows a believer to increase in faith, calm his soul, and gain contentment in his heart.’¹⁸ The increase in belief brought about by any proper analysis is not limited to merely affirming the existence of Allah ﷻ. Rather it allows a servant to gain an enhanced insight into the perfect characteristics of his Lord ﷻ and acknowledge that He is complete in His power, will, knowledge, wisdom, mercy, and the like. This analysis and contentment offer similar to what Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl ﷺ gained: “My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead.” Allah responded, “Do you not believe?” Ibrāhīm replied, “Yes I do, but just so my heart can be reassured.”¹⁹ With sound rational analysis, a believer can acquire greater contentment for the heart. This is legislated and is further emphasised in situations when there are doubts and potential objections swirling around a person.

The argument from *fiṭrah* allows man to obtain synoptic knowledge of His Lord ﷻ. However, the *fiṭrah* is unable to offer him a more rounded and complete knowledge of Him; it is here that the role of revelation kicks into play, revealing to the servant the details of His perfect and magnificent attributes that allow him to have a deeper connection with His Lord ﷻ.

Revelation’s argument for the existence of the natural predisposition element

¹⁶ *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/333.

¹⁷ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 16.338.

¹⁸ *Al-Intiṣār li-Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, p. 60.

¹⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 259.

In the evidence of the Shariah, there are pointers to the element of the *fiṭrah* existing in the soul, albeit with ambiguity surrounding what this element requires and what meanings it comprises of. What is clear is that these texts of the Shariah depict it as a religious imprint. Consider what Allah ﷻ said: ‘So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness O Prophet – the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in all people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know.’²⁰

Ibn Kathīr explained this: ‘So turn your face straight. Continue upon that which Allah legislated for you – the monotheistic religion of Ibrāhīm, which Allah has guided you to and perfected for you. With this, hold fast to your sound *fiṭrah*, upon which Allah created the creation, for He ﷻ created His creation so they could recognise Him, consider Him to be one, and believe there is no god besides Him.’²¹ Similar to the above verse is the following verse: ‘This is the natural Way of Allah. And who is better than Allah in ordaining a way? And we worship none but Him.’²² As for Allah’s statement ‘Let there be no change in this creation of Allah’, Ibn Kathīr ﷻ said in his *Tafsīr*, ‘Some said it means “Do not change the creation of Allah” – people had changed from the *fiṭrah* upon which Allah had created them. Therefore, this verse would be read as a command shrouded by a proposition, like “Whoever enters it is safe”²³, i.e., protect those who enter it. This is a sound and proper interpretation. Others said that this is an actual statement of fact, which means that Allah ﷻ equalised all His creation by creating them on the unadulterated condition of the *fiṭrah*, nobody is born without this being programmed into him, and there is no disparity between people in this regard.’²⁴

On the same theme of *fiṭrah* and the true religion is the famous narration from Abū Hurayrah ﷺ: ‘The Prophet ﷺ said, “Every newborn is born on *fiṭrah*. It is his parents who make him into a Jew, Christian, or Magian. It is just like a beast that is born as a whole – do you find some among them maimed?”’ Abū Hurayrah ﷺ then read: ‘The natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in all people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way.’²⁵ It is reported on the authority of ‘Iyād al-Mujāshī’ī that, one day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in his sermon, ‘Behold, my Lord commanded me that I should teach you that which you do not know. From what He has taught me today is this: “Every property I have conferred upon the servant is lawful. I created all My servants with a natural inclination to the worship of Allah. It is satans who turn them away from the right religion. He makes unlawful what has been declared

²⁰ *Al-Rūm*, 30.

²¹ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 6/313.

²² *Al-Baqarah*, 138.

²³ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 97.

²⁴ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 6/314.

²⁵ Narrated by Bukhārī, hadith no. 1359, and Muslim, hadith no. 6926.

lawful for them, and he commands them to ascribe partners unto Me, although he has no justification for that...”²⁶

Like the previous verses, this narration reveals the element of an innate predisposition that begets religiosity. This religiosity is rightly guided and not perverted. It comprises of the cognition of Allah. No type of religiosity can be envisaged without this foundation. In fact, it is apparent that this religiosity begets the monotheism of Allah ﷻ in both His lordship and worship. In addition, the scriptural text contains pointers to the specific meaning of the cognition of Allah ﷻ as one of the central elements of *fiṭrah*: ‘And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and had them testify regarding themselves. Allah asked, “Am I not your Lord?” They replied, “Yes, You are! We testify.” He cautioned, “Now you have no right to say on Judgement Day, ‘We were not aware of this.’”²⁷ Scholars differ over the interpretation of this verse:

1. Some scholars are of the view that the narrations on the exegesis of this verse are authentic. They say that the verse alludes to a discussion that occurred between the Lord and the children of Adam, which was about bringing them together in the ‘world of souls’ and making them testify. One such narration is reported by Ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Allah took the pact from the back (i.e., loins) of Adam at Na‘mān, i.e., ‘Arafah. He brought out from his loins every single one of his children He created. He spread them out in front of Him, like small particles. Then He spoke to them...’²⁸
2. Others are of the view that the testimony mentioned here alludes to the *fiṭrah* that testifies in favour of Allah ﷻ. The act of bringing them forth and making them testify was simply about creating them in a manner that would trigger affirming Him and His lordship in the worldly life.

Regardless of the preferred view, and the arguments and counterarguments that can be made for both, this verse encompasses the concept of *fiṭrah* from two angles. According to the first view, the indication would be that the soul bears the element that requires affirming Allah ﷻ. It would be a remnant of that event that occurred to all people in the realm of souls. Therefore, man’s *fiṭrah* – even though he may have forgotten that event – would be a remnant of that event. As for the second view, it is the more obvious and direct meaning of the verse. One verse which also denotes that part of the *fiṭrah* is to acknowledge the existence of Allah ﷻ is what the Messengers said in response to the disbelievers. The Qur’an says,

²⁶ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 7386.

²⁷ *Al-A‘rāf*, 172.

²⁸ Narrated by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*, hadith no. 2455.

‘Their messengers came to them with clear proofs, but they put their hands over their mouths and said, “We totally reject what you have been sent with, and we are certainly in alarming doubt about what you are inviting us to.” Their messengers asked them, “Is there any doubt about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the Earth? He is inviting you in order to forgive your sins and delay your end until your appointed term.”’²⁹

As mentioned by Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr*, the sentence ‘Is there any doubt about Allah?’ can mean one of two things: ‘One possibility is that this means “Is there any doubt in the existence of Allah?” This is because human predispositions testify to His existence and are conditioned to affirm Him. Acknowledging Him is instinctive to the sound *fiṭrah*. However, some may have been subjected to doubt and confusion, and would therefore require analysis of evidence that leads to affirming His existence. This is why the Messengers, when instructing their people to His recognition, said: “Originator of the heavens and the Earth” – He is the One Who created and innovated them without any template. The testimonies of temporality, creation, and facilitation are obvious therein – they must therefore require a Maker, Who is Allah, the One Who is the only God, the Creator of everything, the Divine, and the Owner. ‘The second possibility in the meaning of “Is there any doubt in Allah?” is “Is there any doubt in His divinity and His oneness in His right to being worshipped?” He is the Creator of everything that is in existence. Nobody other than Him has the right to be worshipped. He is alone and without partner. Most nations affirmed the Maker but worshipped intermediaries as well, thinking that they benefited them or brought them closer to Allah.’³⁰

It would seem that the context of this Qur’anic passage favours the latter meaning, given that what those disbelievers doubted was the message of the Messengers. It is known that their message was all about monotheism of Allah in worship. However, the wording denotes doubting in Allah from *any angle*, which would include doubting His existence; the generality of the word is taken into consideration, as per the rules of Islamic scriptural hermeneutics. Therefore, the verse would reveal proofs that are to be used in response to those who have doubts in Allah:

1. *Fiṭrah*, which is what is intended by ‘Is there any doubt in Allah?’. It calls upon the *fiṭrah* inside the soul to denounce any doubt in Allah.
2. Logic, as per the statement of the Messengers: ‘The Originator of the heavens and the Earth’. This evidence is actually using the *effect* to prove the *effector*. There would be no room to doubt the existence

²⁹ *Ibrāhīm*, 9-10.

³⁰ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 4/482.

of the Effector when the effects of His creation are manifest across the heavens and Earth.

These are some of the scriptural indications that reveal the presence of the cognition of Allah ﷻ in the soul. The default for someone with sound *fiṭrah* is that there is no need for him to engage in analysis and evidence, but rather this is a belief that is imprinted onto the unadulterated soul and leads the servant to acknowledging his Lord ﷻ and affirming His lordship and divinity.

Conceptualising the innateness of cognition

When we say the innateness of cognition of the Divine, what is not intended is that it is present in the soul ever since man is born. Allah ﷻ states in the Qur'an, 'And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and intellect so perhaps you would be thankful.'³¹ Rather, what is intended from the innateness of cognition is that it is an imprint on the soul, which would ultimately kick into action once the prerequisites of acknowledging Allah are met and the obstacles to that are removed. Without this sequence of events, it is possible that the *fiṭrah* does not kick into action. This can happen because of an external element corrupting the soul. The Prophet ﷺ alerted people to this fact: 'Every newborn is born on *fiṭrah*. It is his parents who make him into a Jew, Christian, or Magian.'

Explaining this, Ibn Taymiyyah said, 'When it is said that a person is born on the *fiṭrah* of Islam, or that he was born a monotheist (*hanīf*), etc., it does not mean that he knows about – or wants – this religion from the moment he left his mother's womb. Allah says, "And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing."³² However, what his *fiṭrah* does is that it begets the faith of Islam in order for him to recognise it and love it. A soul upon the *fiṭrah* triggers an acknowledgement and love of its Creator, and the sincere devotion of faith for Him. The requirements of *fiṭrah* are gained gradually according to how perfectly intact the *fiṭrah* is, depending on to what extent it was safeguarded from anything that contradicts it.'³³

Reality's testimony for the innateness of recognising the Divine

Reality testifies that man's inclination to faith in Allah ﷻ, and the inclination to theism, are core elements inside him. One indicator of this phenomenon is the requirement and alertness of the *fiṭrah* when facing hardships and tough times. Whenever any affliction or major calamity befalls man, an uncontrollable feeling

³¹ *Al-Nahl*, 78.

³² *Al-Nahl*, 78.

³³ *Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 8/383.

is sparked in his soul that he cannot repel. This suggests that there is a higher power who is able to repel it and save him. In such situations, he would find within himself the need to beseech his Lord to deliver him from this calamity.

The Qur'an points to this meaning in verses such as:

‘When one is touched with hardship, they cry out to their Lord, turning to Him alone.’³⁴

‘And it so happens that you are on ships, sailing with a favourable wind, to the passengers’ delight. Suddenly, the ships are overcome by a gale wind and those on board are overwhelmed by waves from every side, and they assume they are doomed. They cry out to Allah alone in sincere devotion, “If You save us from this, we will certainly be grateful.”’³⁵

After mentioning the evidence for the existence of Allah ﷻ, Rāzī said, ‘When man faces a great test or a huge calamity, he loses all hope in that he feels nobody in the creation can come to his aid. It is as if he – invoking his original state of creation and the requirement of his basic nature – is begging the one who *can* grant him deliverance and take him out of his predicament. This is nothing other than the testimony of *fiṭrah* by him acknowledging his need for the Creator, the Planner.’³⁶ The English aphorism says, ‘There are no atheists in foxholes.’

Generally, most scholars – even atheist ones – affirm this innate understanding inside the soul, even though atheists obviously do not refer to it as the *fiṭrah*. Theism transcends the environmental context of one’s upbringing or external influences that may have influenced this predisposition. It is indeed a core feature in man. Testimonies in favour of this are numerous and manifest in various cognitive aspects of life. Human history tells us that religion is a central feature in all civilisations and nations. Anthropological studies underscore this by revealing that the phenomenon of religion was widespread across all human societies. Psychology, sociology, and other branches of social science state the same.

In fact, there are now dedicated fields of specialised study that focus specifically on this phenomenon. One such branch of study, which was only just recently spun off from neuroscience, is neurotheology. It discusses the nature of the connection between man’s neuro-structure and religiosity. ‘Religion is hardwired in humans’ is a maxim that is widely known in this field of study, denoting that religion is natural to man and a core human component. One interesting expression, which is a play on the term *homo sapiens* (wise human), is the one used by Karen Armstrong in her book *A History of God*, where she

³⁴ *Al-Zumar*, 8.

³⁵ *Yūnus*, 22.

³⁶ *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, 19/94.

suggested that we are in fact *homo religious* (religious humans). In fact, studies have reached the point where they are searching for the actual gene responsible for the religious disposition inside man. The American geneticist Dean Hamer published a book in 2005 called *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired into our Genes*. Others have conducted a search for the area of the brain responsible for this disposition. They proposed a number of assumptions which state that there are centres inside the brain responsible for the spiritual side of humans. Such studies include those conducted by Professor Andrew Newberg, who has a number of interviews, discussions, and lectures in this regard. He also co-authored a book with Mark Robert Waldman, called *How God Changes Your Brain*.

Professor Kevin Nelson, a neuroscientist, has a study that focuses on the spiritual aspect of man: *The God Impulse: Is Religion Hardwired into Our Brains?* In this book, he states, ‘On the other hand, my work also irks some die-hard atheists, because it inextricably links spirituality with what it means to be human and makes it an integral part of all of us, whether our reasoning brain likes it or not.’³⁷ The point here is not about giving credence to everything in these studies, or to agree with their conclusions, as they are points of scientific contention. Some of these works even deny the workings of what we as Muslims would consider to be instrumental in the topic, such as the existence of the soul. In a nutshell, there is no rational impediment to the notion that the biological construct of man has an impact on religiosity. There is no impediment to the idea that Allah biologically created us so that we are amenable to faith. However, restricting the discussion to the biological angle alone is no doubt a mistake, as this focuses only on a materialistic and naturalistic viewpoint.

The point of mentioning these studies is to highlight that there is a point to these types of investigations. The concept of affirming the existence of Allah ﷻ is so deeply ingrained in humankind that it warrants further study and investigation. One phrase found in anthropological and religio-sociological studies is that which was stated by the Greek historian, Plutarch. He said, ‘If we traverse the world, it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without coinage, without schools and theatres; but a city without a temple, or that which does not practise worship, prayer, and the like, no one ever saw.’ What I have observed is that many proponents of New Atheism do not discuss the inclination towards religiosity head on. Rather, they explain it away using materialistic and Darwinist explanations, though this suggests they begrudgingly accept the existence of this inclination.

Darwinist interpretations of life are based on the search for either a) the advantages of living for living beings or b) the causes of their existence if those advantages are not primarily intended or are considered inconsequential but are

³⁷ *The God Impulse*, p. 11.

just a by-product of the natural selection process for life and the survival of humankind. In his book *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins argued that the result of religiosity and faith is borne out of the child's inclination to believe its parents in everything they say. In Darwinist terms, the inclination developed during this process has the benefit of keeping the child safe from what is harmful to it. When its parents warn it from coming close to fire or falling, it would be in its interest to possess the inclination of believing them.

The problem, as he sees it, is that a child is unable to discern right from wrong. This is why, he claims, children are inoculated with the virus of faith. This is how the virus of faith spreads and is passed down generation to generation. It takes hold of societies across the world. Dawkins has an episode that aired on Channel 4 in the UK, entitled as *The Virus of Faith*, which is a part of his *The Root of All Evil* documentary series. It is interesting to note that in one of his television discussions, Dawkins was asked about a child who believes in Santa Claus but realises that it is a mythical person after growing up, and why the same does not happen when it comes to God. He was unable to offer a response.

Furthermore, in his book *Why People Believe Strange Things*, Michael Shermer explained away this religious instinct by stating that those among our ancestors who had an inclination for fearing the unseen were better suited for survival than those who did not have any such inclination. To clarify, when a noise is heard from the bush, it might be something that is unharmed, but it can also be a predator. One opting for caution, preparing a response to it, and running away from it – even if there is nothing of danger there – would be more suited for survival than one who does not prepare any defence. It is possible that there is actually something harmful lurking in the bush. This is represented in the inclination of fearing the unknown and the unseen, which evolved – he claims – to a religiously flavoured inclination.

It is clear that Darwinism is dominated, even at a moral level, by the tendency to switch from a simple idea to a variety of complex ideas. This is why in his book *Breaking the Spell*, Daniel Dennett dedicated a chapter to this issue, which he named 'Religion as a natural phenomenon'. In objection to these sorts of ideas, what the Darwinist atheist Jerry Coyne has said is sufficient: 'There is an increasing (and disturbing) tendency of psychologists, biologists, and philosophers to Darwinize every aspect of human behavior, turning its study into a scientific parlor game. But imaginative reconstructions of how things might have evolved are not science; they are stories.'³⁸

One strange phenomenon that is found in many atheists is that they strive to fill the gap left by their denial of Allah's existence and their abandonment of religion. One interesting event that occurred in this regard was the call launched

³⁸ *Why Evolution is True*, p. 248.

by the Swiss atheist, Alain de Botton, under the banner ‘Atheism 2.0’. It was an attempt to update atheism by acknowledging that it contained many holes, and that aspects of the religions can be taken to fill those in. He has a famous TED lecture in this regard, which he delivered just before he published his book *Religion for Atheists*. The famous atheist Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*, wrote a book called *Waking Up: Searching for Spirituality Without Religion*, in which he postulated a spiritual aspect to atheism. More recently, I came across a book written by Frank Schaeffer with an odd and puzzling title: *Why I am an Atheist Who Believes in God*.

As a result of the gap felt by many atheists, they have started to establish liturgical atheist societies (of sorts) that resemble those found in religious groups. In fact, some of these societies have started up what are known as ‘churches of atheism’, which have spread across a number of countries including Canada, Britain, America, and other nations. They have also begun quasi-religious festivals to commemorate key atheist events, such as Darwin Day, Atheist Day, and even Blasphemy Day. The lattermost festival was announced in 2009 by the Center of Inquiry (CFI), and is held on 30 September. This day was chosen because it was the very date in which the Danish newspapers released the infamous images that disparaged the Prophet ﷺ.

I debated a young atheist once. During the discussion, he mentioned to me that he yearned for those days in which he could attain some contentment via prostration, and that it brought about a wave of indescribably great feelings inside of him. But he went on to say that, with persistent doubts and objections, he is unable to return to what he described as a blind form of faith. This is a type of yearning for heaven.³⁹ ‘There is a need in the heart that cannot be met by anything apart from Allah ﷻ. There is a disorder of sort therein, which cannot be taken care of without turning to Him. There is a sickness in it that cannot be cured without sincerity to Him and worshipping Him alone. The heart continues to strike the person it resides in until it is content and comfortable with its God. Only then can it entertain the spirit of life and acquire its taste, after which he would be able to gain a life other than that which is spent by the heedless who turn away from this matter.’ If it is thought that man stands alone⁴⁰, then verily, man does not stand alone.⁴¹

³⁹ *Al-Hanīn ilā al-Samā’* (*Yearning for Heaven*) is an excellent book written by Hānī Nasīrah. The book is a study of the switch to Islamic ideology within Egyptian society during the second half of the 20th century.

⁴⁰ *Man Stands Alone* is the title of a book by Julian Huxley, grandson of Thomas Huxley, the infamous atheist and the so-called ‘Darwin’s Bulldog’.

⁴¹ *Man Does Not Stand Alone* is the title of a famous book written by A. Cressy Morrison. Unfortunately, this captivating title by the author – which he wrote in response to the aforementioned book – was altered on the cover of its Arabic translation to a lesser title, which is translated into English as *Science Calls to Religion*.

The indicator of the *fiṭrah* is sufficient in itself to bring about conviction vis-à-vis the existence of Allah ﷻ for most people, without the need to resort to evidence-based reasoning. When most people look at their innermost selves, they would find this element present. It suffices them from producing evidence and proofs to support this. However, sufficing with the *fiṭrah* is insufficient when debating atheists, as they would simply deny the existence of this inclination, whether a) in spite of knowing it exists, b) because some actually do have an actual objection to it, causing them to not feel the existence of their Maker, or c) they do not consider its existence – which some would affirm – to be evidence for the Maker. The latter group would argue that its existence might just be a baseless human instinct, which Darwinism exposed as being for the mere advantage of the species' survival. Cognitively speaking, there is absolutely no confidence in such an inclination being accurate.

This leads us to take the discussion on the argument from *fiṭrah* for the existence of Allah to the next level. After that, we will tackle the principles of rational inference for this issue.

Chapter 2

LEVELS OF THE INDICATION OF THE FITRAH FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH

The argument from *fiṭrah* for Allah ﷻ is not limited to the element that exists in the soul, which requires a person to affirm that there is a Creator. Rather, it is possible that the *fiṭrah* reveals this substantial fact in a number of ways and at various levels.

First level: The indication of basic rational concepts

Of the issues a person can automatically grasp are certain natural and rational facts, referred to as intuitive knowledge or self-evident truths. These are innately known and are acquired by the soul without any analysis or reasoning. This is in contrast to the type of knowledge that is known as theoretical knowledge, which can be acquired only via analysis and reasoning.

The difference between the two should be clear; in fact, it should be self-evident such that every person must instantly recognise it, as opposed to theoretical knowledge that can be prone to doubt and objection. Such objections may be repelled through analysis and reasoning. It is in the nature of intuitive knowledge that it is not dependent on proof; rather, intuitive knowledge itself is used as evidence. Theoretical knowledge is referred back to intuitive knowledge for verification. Explaining this, Ibn Ḥazm says, ‘Whatever that can be acquired immediately through logic or the senses is not in need of evidence at all. Rather, it is these types of facts that everyone ought to use as evidence and refutation, after which his theoretical reasoning can be deemed to be correct or incorrect.’⁴²

Mu‘allimī said, ‘As for instinctive and self-evident information, the logicians agree that it is the currency of logic. On the other hand, deriving information from analytical knowledge can only be aspired when it is based on, and attributed to, the former.’⁴³ Reasoning cannot work without the existence of intuitive information. Without it, circular reasoning and infinite regress would come as a result, causing the collapse of the entire system of reasoning. Explaining this, Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘Knowledge that is acquired by analysing proof must refer back

⁴² *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*, 5/242; see also 1/40.

⁴³ *Al-Qā’id ilā Taṣḥīḥ al-‘Aqā’id*, p. 38.

to intuitive propositions. Any piece of knowledge that is not intuitive must refer back to intuitive knowledge. If theoretical propositions are constantly proven by their like, circular reasoning or infinite regress of causality would ensue. By necessity and the agreement of logicians, both are improper from a number of angles.

Acquired theoretical knowledge is that which is gained from known propositions that do not require analysis. Had those propositions been theoretical as well, they would have in turn been contingent on other propositions, leading to an infinity of theoretical propositions inside man. Man is temporal – he came into existence after having been non-existent. The knowledge in his heart is temporal. If the knowledge in his heart was not acquired without knowledge prior to it, it would mean that his heart would be without knowledge right from the start. Therefore, it is necessary that there are basic self-evident pieces of information that Allah places within a person's heart. The aim of any proof is to refer back to this type of self-evident information. Furthermore, self-evident information is sometimes subject to doubts and whispers, like the doubts of sophists who cast aspersions on tangible and self-evident information.

These include, for example, the doubts cast by Rāzī in the beginning of his *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, which we have discussed elsewhere:

Doubts that are injurious to that information cannot be repelled with proof. This is because the aim of proof is that it refers back to that intuitive information. Therefore, when doubt creeps in, the path to analysis and research is closed off. This is why those who deny tangible and instinctive information are not to be debated. In fact, if such a person is being obstinate, he should be disciplined until he admits the truth. If he is mistaken due to corruption afflicting his senses or his mind, is simply unable to understand that information, or for any other reason, he should be treated so that he can gain the prerequisites of acquiring knowledge and be able to dispel those things that block it. If he is still unable to comprehend because of corruption in his temperament, he should be treated with medicament that deals with this, or with supplication, *ruqyah*, special attention, etc. Otherwise, he should be left alone.⁴⁴

Any attempt to demonstrate the veracity of self-evident truths through reasoning is very hard. In fact, it can be impossible and may lead a person to doubt them, thus falling into one of the many types of sophism. In any case, such a process would be tantamount to torturing the soul without any benefit whatsoever. Expounding on this, Ibn Taymiyyah offered a fine example to demonstrate the nature of this problem:

⁴⁴ *Dar' Ta'ārūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/309.

When instinctively comprehended matters are reasoned through non-instinctive means, one will be tormenting the soul in vain. This is similar to a man who is told to divide a certain sum of money into equal portions among a number of individuals – a task that should be performed without difficulty. Someone may say to him, “Wait, you cannot divide it without knowing the definition of division and without drawing a distinction between division and multiplication. Division is the opposite of multiplication. The latter is carried out by compounding the units of one number by the units of the other, whereas the former is achieved by dividing the units of one number by the units of the other. This is why when the quotient is multiplied by the divisor, the result is the dividend, and when the number resulting from multiplication is divided by one of the two numbers multiplied, the result is the other number... “What I have said about the definition of multiplication is not valid because it applies to the multiplication of integers, not fractional numbers. An all-inclusive definition would be: Multiplication is the sum total whose relation to one of the numbers multiplied is the same as the relation of figure one to the other number... “The multiplication of one-half by one-quarter results in one-eighth. The relation of one-eighth to one-quarter is the same as the relation of one-half to the figure one.” Although these are all valid statements, it is clear that the person who has money and wishes to distribute it equally among a number of individuals would agonise in vain if he were to force himself to understand all this before he divided the money. He may not even understand these matters and may find them problematic.⁴⁵ Explaining what the process of reasoning for self-evident truth can lead to, he adds: ‘A lot of information is necessary and instinctive. If a person wants to force himself to offer reasoning for that, it would be difficult for him. He would land himself into doubt, whether because it would lead to lengthy propositions, because they are difficult to unlock, or both.’⁴⁶

If there is ever a case that self-evident facts need to be reasoned, then that would actually be to demonstrate that they are indeed innate and instinctive, not to prove they are correct. There is a difference between revealing the nature of something and the attempt to offer evidence for its veracity – the former is akin to reminding the heedless and forgetful. This is why when discussing the evidence that proves the existence of Allah ﷻ, Ibn Taymiyyah said,

⁴⁵ *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn*, p. 249.

⁴⁶ *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/319.

So when he sees the signs that necessitate His existence, they would be an eye-opener from that spectrum, just as He ﷻ said, “Indeed, when Satan whispers to those mindful of Allah, they remember their Lord then they start to see things clearly.”⁴⁷ It would also be a reminder to remember Allah when forgetfulness and heedlessness overcome. Therefore, it is an eye-opener to dispel the ignorance one may experience, and a reminder to remove one’s heedlessness. This is despite the fact that the core recognition of Allah’s existence is instinctively found in the soul without any external means whatsoever.⁴⁸

This brings about two valid questions:

1. Where did the soul gain intuitive knowledge?
2. From where does intuitive knowledge acquire its universal and absolute objectivity?

From the previous discussion, it was made clear that intuitive information is already present in the heart. It is not acquired through the process of education. It is not information accessed from any external source. Therefore, it is perfectly natural to ask the following question: What or who placed these instinctive ideas in the heart? The logical answer is Allah.

In order to sidestep this question, atheist discourse has strived to cast doubt on the instinctive nature of this cognition, claiming that such information is borne out of the education received by the senses via the process of induction (*istiqrā’*). They propose the following: If a man adds an apple to another, it would be two apples; if he adds an orange to another, it would be two oranges. This is a universal rule: $1+1=2$. They add that the rule of causality is borne out of the cause-effect process that man perceives through his senses. In a nutshell, they claim that this knowledge is borne out of this experience, not because of any instinctive knowledge in this regard that precludes the senses.

This philosophical outlook – interpreting rational information by referring them back to sensory knowledge and disregarding any innate predisposition – leads to a number of cognitive problems. It opens up the door of doubting the instinctive and recurring truths that these concepts actually are. The ‘try-and-test’ method that covers every human experience is impossible to achieve. Therefore, it is possible that a man can still have doubts about this universal law, as it might be broken somewhere outside of his limited ‘try-and-test’ experiment. For example, he would not know that there is an event, somewhere in the universe, that came to pass without any external cause triggering it.

⁴⁷ *Al-A‘rāf*, 201.

⁴⁸ *Dar’ Ta‘ārūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 8/531.

This problem led some atheists to propose a view that acknowledges the universal recurrence of these rational concepts *in practice*, without attempting to explain them from a philosophical or theoretical viewpoint. These philosophers acknowledge a pragmatic *quid pro quo* arrangement in the universe: Man engages with his daily life believing these are innate and self-evident truths, while in reality, their self-evidentiary, innate, and instinctive nature is something that cannot be demonstrated or reasoned with proof. The problem is compounded when some atheists actually adopt a sceptical approach to self-evident and necessary concepts: that there cannot be any theoretical knowledge that could be gained from them, nor should they be accepted as self-evident facts.

The famous atheist Lawrence Krauss has stated on multiple occasions that the human mind is primitive and evolving – in Darwinist terms – to safely interact with the dangers in the savannah; however, they are minds that are not necessarily able to understand the nature of this universe or existential reality. Therefore, he claims, it is necessary that the world is understood through the world itself – via observation and empiricism, without relying on anything known as rational concepts, let alone referring to them as arbiters of truth. Truth, he claims, is only that which we can access via observation and the senses according to the scientific method, no matter how strange it may appear – or contradictory even – to our instinctive minds.

Krauss mentioned this in his book *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing*, which is based on the idea that even though the universe came from nothing, it can create itself from itself as per the laws of physics. This assertion with the detail it entails is extremely problematic, as it leads to multiple cognitive problems that are extremely dangerous. Some of this cognitive disorder became apparent in Krauss's debate with Hamza Tzortzis, *Islam or Atheism: Which Makes More Sense?* In this debate, the self-conflicting and confused position of Krauss was exposed, as it was revealed that he was unable to construct any sound cognitive viewpoint. Its problems begin in that it discards basic rational concepts. Discarding them leads to the abandonment of not only trust in the tools of observation, but also a loss of trust in the scientific method itself. The scientific method is the sole path to knowledge, as per the view purported by extreme scientism. The scientific method is based on assertions whose evidence cannot be demonstrated through the scientific method itself; otherwise, it will lead to circularity.

The position that knowledge can only be based on natural and scientific information is a self-contradictory one that cannot be deemed rationally acceptable. However, what are we to do if this type of objection is directed at those who deny basic rational concepts, when – as you can see – the objection is based on them? How can it be convincing to those who do not see any problem in accepting that the universe created itself? If they are willing to accept this type of

view, then what is stopping them from claiming that ‘the scientific method is correct because of...the scientific method’? There is little doubt that the proposal of such a conceptualisation leads to sophistry. Indeed, some atheists have fallen victim to this type of mentality.

On one occasion, I was in a discussion with some youth who were afflicted by atheist ideas. The discussion led us to Western-style polemics on the subject, so I saw that it was necessary for the discussion to be brought back to a common ground. I started to speak on the human sources of information. I said that, broadly speaking, these sources are three:

1. The senses.
2. Logic.
3. Transmitted information.

Imagine how surprised I was when I learned that the source of gaining information according to them was sensory only, not rational issues (whether theoretical or instinctive)! I wanted to be certain that this problem actually existed in their mindset. I asked them a number of questions to ascertain their convictions on the topic, and why they would propose such a key principle. What I said was the following: ‘One basic rational concept is that “part < whole”. Imagine we have an orange in front of us and we split it into quarters. Would that one quarter be smaller than, equal to, or larger than the whole orange?’ I was shocked when they replied: ‘We cannot know until we see this orange and cut it ourselves.’ I told them, ‘At home, I have a book titled as *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyyah* in 37 volumes. Is the first volume smaller than, equal to, or larger than the whole collection?’ They said, ‘We would not know until we visited you at your home and saw it.’ There was a coffee pot in front of us. I said to one of them, ‘Lift the pot up.’ When he raised it, I said, ‘Will you be able to raise the coffee cup – which is lighter – based on your knowledge that you can lift something heavier?’ He reached out to the cup – I said to him, ‘I do not want you to experiment.’ He said, ‘I would not know the answer until I experiment.’ I finished my line of questioning by asking one of them, ‘Do you exist or not?’ He said, ‘I exist.’ I said, ‘Is it possible that science in the future will be able to prove that you are in fact non-existent?’ He said, ‘It is possible.’ The discussion ended at this.

To be fair, there were some among them who did not agree with their fellows’ denial of basic rational concepts, and were of the view that this type of theorising and foundational basis would end the discussion. However, his friends were opposed to this. The truth is that some of their proposals did not necessarily arise from obstinacy or haughtiness. Rather, they based this on data, some of which goes back to the rule that knowledge cannot be instinctively established without the intermediary of the senses. They also rely on scientific assertions – especially in the field of quantum physics – that duped them into believing that there is no way to marry rational and scientific assertions.

Whoever has read quantum physics will know how ambiguous it is, and how complex it is for a human mind to navigate its many aspects. John Wheeler said, ‘If you are not completely confused by quantum mechanics, you do not understand it.’⁴⁹ Roger Penrose said, ‘Quantum mechanics makes absolutely no sense.’⁵⁰ Richard Feynman said, ‘I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics.’⁵¹

I believe that it is not proper for a person to discard self-evident knowledge and their objective value just for natural knowledge. What is incumbent is to have natural knowledge governed by self-evident knowledge – whatever from the former is ambiguous or contradicts the latter should be cast aside. We must believe that we are ignorant of reality; if that ignorance is dispelled, then most certainly the sensory and tangible would be in alignment with the rational. Without this approach, we will be left without any knowledge, whether tangible or rational. It has thus been conclusively proven that there is a real problem facing many atheists, and that there is a degree of inability on their part to reconcile the two, leading to extremely dangerous conclusions.

In his book *The Grand Design*, which was co-authored with Leonard Mlodinow, Stephen Hawking said, ‘Indeed, like many notions in today’s science, it appears to violate common sense. But common sense is based upon everyday experience, not upon the universe as it is revealed through the marvels of technologies, such as those that allow us to gaze deep into the atom or back to the early universe.’⁵² The problem with this passage is the ambiguity surrounding the idea of ‘common sense’. Does it mean that basic rational concepts are to be denied, or does it simply mean nomological impossibilities?

A person might mistakenly assume that something nomologically impossible is also rationally impossible, only to later find out that it is not rationally impossible. However, there is a package of basic instinctive concepts that appear to be higher than the very existence of man. Such instinctive information is not gained by mere human experience. This is why it is an error to deny logical impossibilities, which in reality are those scenarios that lead to a contradiction, such as a squared circle, a moving motionless body, something that is neither in existence nor in non-existence, etc. These sorts of images are not from the family of nomological impossibilities – such that our understanding of nomological impossibilities goes back solely to our human experience. Rather, these are logical impossibilities that cannot ever be envisaged in the external world at all.

⁴⁹https://physicscourses.colorado.edu/phys3220/phys3220_fa08/quotes.html#:~:text=%20If%20you%20are%20not%20completely,Albert%20Einstein.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *The Grand Design*, p. 15.

The problem with Hawking's passage is further clarified with what he mentions in the same book: 'Quantum physics might seem to undermine the idea that nature is governed by laws, but that is not the case.'⁵³ If this appears to be the case, then why is it not like that then in actual truth? The reason for that is what appears to be contradictory would be referred back to other concepts and assertions, so that the problem of contradiction is solved. One of these concepts are the instinctive rational concepts.

The truth is that quantum physics, with all its scientific and rational implications, is an important field of study. It requires the convergence of many specialists to clarify the reality of assertions made in physics in order to offer answers to concepts brought up by those assertions.

The problem faced by atheists vis-à-vis basic rational principles goes back, for the large part, to their materialistic and Darwinist outlook on our existence. If we could negotiate the deadlock caused by the notion that matter is able to produce logic, and that Darwinist evolution is able to create this product, then one question that Darwinism poses vis-à-vis our rational capabilities is this: Did nature evolve and develop minds for us that are able to reach objective realities, or did it evolve and develop them for us to live and survive, regardless of the possibilities in revealing the actual true nature of things? Is it possible that our minds tell us something and make it out as if it is necessary for us so that we can live and survive, even though this might just be a fantasy?

This is one of the deep problems with Darwinism. It leads to wide problems in general atheist discourse across a number of issues, such as the innateness of faith in God, the desire for religion, the sense of morality, the tendency of free will, etc. This is because all of these are explained through the Darwinist lens, that is based on either a) the advantages of living for living beings or b) the causes of their existence if those advantages are not primarily intended or are considered inconsequential, but are rather just a by-product of the natural selection process for life and the survival of humankind. Logic is not the first to think this. Nature – as per the Darwinist view – evolved our minds so we can survive. As for the fact that these minds are able to learn about reality, then that is a by-product if it exists; otherwise, it is quite possible to assume that our minds have duped us, simply so that we may survive.

This deep problem was something acknowledged by Darwin himself. He expressed his confusion on the issue, saying, 'But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy.'⁵⁴ The

⁵³ *The Grand Design*, p. 93.

⁵⁴ *Darwin Correspondence Project, Letter to William Graham, 3 July 1881*, <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-13230.xml>

rejection and downplaying of these rational and necessary truths – whether they are those truths that are sometimes incredibly self-evident, or those undeniable truths that are somewhat reserved by nature – has created a severe pushback against philosophy and rational theory, whether that is governed by the religious mindset or not.

This is why many people, in various contexts, have declared that philosophy is dead and offers no benefit. One famous quotation is by Hawking in the beginning of *The Great Design*: ‘Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.’⁵⁵ PZ Myers said, ‘A lot of philosophy can destroy you.’⁵⁶ Krauss said,

Philosophy is a field that, unfortunately, reminds me of that old Woody Allen joke, “those that can’t do, teach, and those that can’t teach, teach gym.” And the worst part of philosophy is the philosophy of science; the only people, as far as I can tell, that read work by philosophers of science are other philosophers of science. It has no impact on physics what so ever, and I doubt that other philosophers read it because it’s fairly technical. And so it’s really hard to understand what justifies it. And so I’d say that this tension occurs because people in philosophy feel threatened, and they have every right to feel threatened, because science progresses and philosophy doesn’t.⁵⁷

This denial of the space for rationality, along with its instinctive and theoretical assertions, when taken with its implications, leads to sophistry, as has been explained before. In its dark shadow, any possibility to access cognition and knowledge would fall apart. Naturally, it would destroy the rule upon which the natural and empirical sciences are founded.

It is strange that even though they magnify and exaggerate the importance of empirical science, they unknowingly operate from a set of preconceived notions that cannot be proven by empirical science. An example of this is the initial starting point that the universe has a reality that is separate from our perception, that it can be studied, that it is subjected to a particular set of laws, and that these laws are fixed. So, whatever is considered to be from the natural laws today will become an accepted reality tomorrow. Operating from a preconceived framework is neither strange nor hard to envisage. What is more amusing is that they cannot divorce themselves from instinctive rational truths, even though they claim to

⁵⁵ *The Grand Design*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ From his lecture *Science and Atheism: Natural Allies*.

⁵⁷ <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/04/has-physics-made-philosophy-and-religion-obsolete/256203/>

deny them. Merely exercising the process of evidence-based reasoning speaks to the fact that they accept the concept of causality, and that there is a link between evidence and that which it points to, because evidence really is a cause of knowing that which the evidence points towards.

In an interesting discussion between Frank Turek and an atheist (Michael) found in one of Turek's lectures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the atheist explicitly doubted the existence of instinctive rational concepts:

Michael: I would argue that the laws of logic really don't exist then.

Frank: So you're saying that they do really exist.

Michael: No.

Frank: Yes, you're saying they do.

Michael: How am I saying they do?

Frank: Because you're using the law of non-contradiction right now to say that I'm wrong.

The law of non-contradiction – which says that opposite ideas cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense – is one of the fundamental laws of logic. Despite using that law and others, Michael continued to assert that the laws of logic don't really exist. It sounded like he was saying that the laws of logic are just a human convention; that we human beings simply invent these laws in our minds but they don't really exist outside of our minds. Several atheists have held this position, including Dr. Stein. When I asked Michael if that was his position, he said "Yes." So I then asked him, "Before there were any humans on the Earth, was the statement, 'There are no human beings on the Earth', true?" Following a long pause, Michael gave a meandering response. After some prompting, he reluctantly admitted that the statement "likely" would be true (yet he continued to cling to the idea that the laws of logic were mere human conventions). Well, of course the statement would be true. And since there were no human minds to conceptualize it, the laws of logic cannot be a mere human convention. In addition, there are several other reasons to believe that the laws of logic are not human conventions that they exist independently of human minds.⁵⁸

This discussion reveals the atheistic dilemma in determining the nature of innate concepts in and of themselves. So are they objective and absolute, or are they relative based on a person's senses? In light of previous statements, many atheists state it is not necessary to follow these instinctive concepts. In fact, they explicitly mention they are opposed to them because of ideas from natural science related to quantum physics and other fields. They set out that reality might be, or *indeed is*, in conflict with innate and instinctive knowledge.

⁵⁸ *Stealing From God*, p. 31.

The implications of this sort of assertion – that basic rational concepts are merely a result of the workings of our minds, with no external objective truth associated with them – are numerous and dangerous. Having human interaction to bring about conviction is at its essence an attempt to bring about conviction to every person on the basis of a common cognitive playing field. The rule upon which this cognition is built must be natural and universal, not relative to x person. With this rule, it is possible to bridge the cognitive identity between the two sides to bring about conviction. Without this, each person would remain confined to their own cognitive realm, unable to fruitfully interact with the next person, as those meanings that transcend both of them – by which they would have been able to forge interaction with a degree of commonality – would be absent.

Had those instinctive concepts been merely the construct of the human mind, every human idea would also be the construct of our minds, leading knowledge to become relative again. In that case, we would lose both the power and the confidence of ever possibly gaining conviction in virtually anything.

This would be a catastrophic problem. Without necessary truths upon which theoretical knowledge can be built, there would be no pathway to offer a coherent philosophical outlook through which the process of evidence-based reasoning or employing proofs would be feasible. The consequences of such an outlook are that one would end up adopting a sophist approach that discards trust in all human knowledge. Such an assertion is the exact environment in which that false claim can gain credence. It asserts that all knowledge is relative, that there is no pathway to gain definitive and conclusive cognitive information, and that nobody possesses objective reality. Such an assertion is self-contradictory, for it assumes that it should be the arbiter unto itself, which exposes its falsehood and error. Disregarding the instinctive rational concepts and their objective nature is in reality to disregard a) every engagement of the human mind, b) the possibility of human interaction, c) the ability to convince one another, and d) the natural empirical sciences. All of these concepts can only survive with the rule that acknowledges instinctive concepts and affirms their higher value that transcends human existence.

The truth is that these types of assertions are a natural overflow from adopting the atheist viewpoint. Without affirming a Maker for this universe – a Maker that would be described with absolute perfection – the possibility of affirming absolute truths would not be possible. And if we are unable to affirm absolute truths, there is no chance for proving the existence of absolute and instinctive knowledge, as it is in the nature of instinctive knowledge to be absolute and agnostic of time, place, environment, and persons. Such knowledge is indeed above and beyond the existence of humans. The law of non-contradiction is both necessary and universally true, whether man exists or not. The principle of causality was an absolute truth before man ever came into existence. The same applies to the notion

that ‘part < whole’, etc. There is no pathway to affirm these absolutes without affirming an absolute existence, which is Allah ﷻ.

A person in denial of his own existence is unable to prove the existence of any absolute truth. Even though he offers a compromise by claiming ‘relative absolutism’ in some aspects of knowledge and science, this conclusion is totally false, as it does not possess the rule upon which cognition can be based in the first place. However, in reality, it is a conclusion that is largely in line with atheist conceptualisations, through which it is impossible to philosophically set out any rational and instinctive knowledge. This is because the cognitive structure for these types of assertions and the demonstration of them through proof is not possible without having faith in the existence of Allah.

Based on this, we can understand the deep and poignant statement of the scholars: ‘Knowing Allah is fundamental to knowing anything.’ I used to ponder quite a bit over this expression in my pursuit of understanding the reality, dimensions, and wealth of meaning behind the outlook expressed in this statement, and the connection between knowing Allah ﷻ and all other knowledge. After grasping these facts, it became apparent to me that the point here is this: All this knowledge is actually a branch of knowing Allah ﷻ. Whosoever does not comprehend His existence is unable to philosophically or rationally establish any coherent cognitive theory that explains to us why this knowledge exists and how it can be acquired.

In this regard, Ibn Taymiyyah said,

Knowing Him (Allah) is the highest of all knowledge. It is the goal, the end, the culmination, and the root of all knowledge, even though knowledge of other than Him might come first, or might be a precursor to, knowing Him. Knowing Him – in addition to being loftier, more wholesome, and more beneficial – is a necessary need. A servant cannot achieve righteousness without Him. There is no felicity without Him. He is the root to the realisation of all knowledge that – through Him – deserves to be labelled as such.’⁵⁹

His student Ibn al-Qayyim ؒ said,

Ponder over the whole world, in all its parts across its higher and lower dominions. You will find it to be a testament to the Maker, the Creator, and the King. Denying its Maker and rejecting Him in the minds and the innate predispositions is tantamount to denial and rejection of knowledge itself. There is no difference between the two. According to pure, enlightened, and lofty minds and the sound *fiṭrah*, the indication of the Creator to the creation, the Doer to the action,

⁵⁹ *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, p. 110.

and the Designer to the fashioned is more obvious than the opposite view. Those with knowledge and foresight use Allah as evidence for His actions and design, whereas common people use His design and actions to point to Him. No doubt, both are correct methods and each is true. The Qur'an comprises of both. As for the evidence from design, it is plentiful. As for the evidence from the Maker, that has a case in point as well. It is what the Messengers pointed to when they told their nations, "Is there any doubt about Allah...?"⁶⁰, i.e., should we doubt in Allah until evidence for His existence is presented? Which evidence is more proper and apparent than this itself? How can something that is more obscure be used in evidence to prove something that is more obvious? Then the Messengers alerted people to the evidence by adding: "...the Originator of the heavens and the Earth?"⁶¹ I heard Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah رحمته say, "How can you demand proof for something that in itself is proof for everything?" He also used to say the following couplet as an example: "*Nothing can be deemed to be correct in the minds when day requires evidence.*" It is known that the existence of the Lord رحمته is more apparent to the minds and the *fitrah* than the existence of day. Whosoever cannot see this in his mind and *fitrah* should view them with suspicion.⁶²

Suffice it to say that it is Allah رحمته Who is the First Teacher. He is the one Who bestowed His favour upon His creation in the form of education – whether without an intermediary, such as people's innate and instinctive predispositions, Him giving the potential and the tools to allow them to analyse and reason, or via His Prophets and Messengers. He رحمته said, 'Read, O Prophet, in the Name of your Lord Who created.'⁶³ Thus, the Islamic conceptualisation of cognition declares that the manifestations of all knowledge originate from Allah رحمته, and that there is no way – whether rationally or philosophically – to establish a coherent theory of knowledge without affirming this fact. So, the existence of this instinctive knowledge points to His existence رحمته, as they are intuitively felt. If the opposing side accepts their existence as objective truths, they would be compelled to affirm the existence of Allah, as these truths cannot possibly be established without Him. However, if the opposing side denies it, the price of such a denial would be very high, as it would categorically shut off the door to any knowledge acquisition; in fact, it would be worse than that, on par with sophism.

⁶⁰ *Ibrāhīm*, 9-10.

⁶¹ *Ibrāhīm*, 9-10.

⁶² *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, Dār al-‘Āshimāh print, 1/297.

⁶³ *Al-‘Alaq*, 1.

Consider the following example – a discussion between Nick Pollard and Richard Dawkins:

Pollard: ‘Susan Blackmore said recently in *The Skeptic*: “I think the idea we exist is an illusion...The idea that there is a self in there that decides things, acts and is responsible...is a whopping great illusion. The self we construct is just an illusion because actually there’s only brains and chemicals and this ‘self’ doesn’t exist – it never did and there’s nobody to die.” Would you agree with that kind of reductionist explanation of who your wife is, who you are?’

Dawkins: ‘Yes. I mean, Susan is sticking her neck out for one particular view of what a self is, and it’s one that I am inclined to think is probably right; but I don’t think we are yet in a position to substantiate that. What makes it seem plausible to me is various things. One is that brains have come into the world by a gradual process of evolution and we have a continuum from ourselves through all the other animals to animals that have very simple brains, to animals that have no brains at all, to plants. Certainly, the prediction that we don’t survive death seems to me to be overwhelmingly probable. That would be a good operational test – not that we can actually test it, but in principle: if a self is something other than brain stuff, then it should survive when the brain rots – and I’d place a very heavy bet (which I realize I could never actually win) that when my brain rots myself will not in any sense exist.’

Pollard: ‘Do you believe that the idea that I exist is an illusion?’

Dawkins: ‘Well, I’m certainly happy that we are a product of brains and that when our brains die, we disappear. To call us an illusion is possibly a good way to express it. But I wouldn’t wish to commit myself to saying that our sense of self is an illusion. It depends what you mean. I certainly feel that there’s a me.’⁶⁴

So Dawkins was quite prepared to accept that the conscience of an individual per se, his sense of personal identity that distinguishes him from others, and his understanding of the ‘me’ concept are all merely illusions. Though Dawkins attempted to come across as diplomatic to downplay the problematic nature of his answer to the reader, his words are sufficient in clearly conveying the type of ideas he espouses. Indeed, Dawkins attempted to portray himself as a rational person during the last moments of this discussion. However, in reality, he tried to sidestep the topic and did not offer anything that would contradict the assertion he made. Merely sensing the concept of ‘me’ and being conscious of it was not the topic of discussion at all, for that is an obvious matter that every person finds and believes

⁶⁴ *The Simple Answer – Nick Pollard talks to Dr. Richard Dawkins.*

for themselves. The posed question actually was the following: Is there anything that explains this tendency? In other words: Is there anything that is real and in existence, which can be correctly classed as ‘me’, that explains how we feel about our existence? Or is the concept of ‘self’, ‘me’, or ‘distinct personal identity’ merely an illusion without any external reality?

Second level: Moral instinct

From the *fiṭrah*-driven elements that man finds in himself is the deeply entrenched moral instinct. With this, one can grasp not only what are good and bad morals, but one also instinctively feels that these moral values are objective by nature. Being objective is what gives these morals their true value and removes relativity from them. These are objective realities that transcend not only human existence, but all material existence. Whether man and the universe exist or not, these moral values retain their objectivity.

Comprehension is twofold: the ability to distinguish good from evil, and the ability to comprehend the objectivity found in the values of good and evil. This duet of comprehension can be deployed in this subject, in which we are attempting to demonstrate the existence of innate predispositions in our own selves that point to the existence of God. This is because this moral inclination cannot be explained without affirming the existence of the Divine. Just as the rational concepts require that we ask the question ‘Who placed them in the soul?’, then likewise the moral inclination requires us to ask: ‘Who placed it there?’ There is another question that is deeper: What explains this instinctive feeling in ourselves that justice is an objective value that makes it universally good, as opposed to injustice, which we necessarily consider to be an objectively evil trait? Consequently, is it possible to offer a philosophically coherent moral outlook in light of the view that does not acknowledge the existence of God? In other words, is it possible that there is any objective good without the existence of God? Put in another way: Is it possible that a person can be good and righteous without the existence of God?

Many atheists jump the gun here, believing that most atheists are morally upright, or that they carry what can only be described as morally good actions in their daily lives. They therefore conclude that it is possible to be good without having any faith in God. However, the question was not whether it is possible to be good without *faith* in God. What the question is actually demanding is whether it is possible to be good without the *existence* of God. In other words, can objective moral values exist without the existence of God? If not, then the question of whether we are good or bad becomes irrelevant, as those values would not exist to begin with.

This issue reveals one of the deep problems of atheist ideology. It is a problem that goes deeper than merely the difference between good and bad values, or the

difference between the means by which good values can be discerned from bad ones. In fact, it is a problem that extends to the question of whether universal moral values that transcend human existence exist, e.g., whether honesty and justice are universally good values, regardless of whether man exists or not, or whether injustice and transgression are universally evil values and not relative to a particular society or era.

The theistic viewpoint adopts this position, and it can argue for its case from a philosophical lens thanks to its faith in the Perfect Lord. This is in addition to the existence of the human *fitrah* that instinctively encourages man to discern between these values. It allows man to grasp that justice is good and injustice is evil – without education or philosophical analysis. It allows him to feel that these values are above and beyond his own existence, and that they are not merely a bunch of titles that man ascribes to a group of actions without any core value being associated with them. The essence of the discussion on morality is a metaphysical one that goes beyond the material realm. Attempting to offer a philosophical viewpoint for the moral dimension from the prison of the material viewpoint is not only difficult, but impossible.

Faith in the existence of a God associated with absolute perfection allows a believer to digest the existence of values that are beyond his own existence, as well as universally recognised traits of perfection, those traits of faults that are opposites to perfection, and a universal standard of ethics by which all actions are judged. Without this faith, this standard would cease to exist and the moral standard for judgement would become relative – they would be as many as the number of people and societies out there.

Since an atheist believes that the existence of the universe and man is just a coincidence – or as per the expression of Stephen Hawking: ‘The human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet’⁶⁵ – then what is the scientific or rational justification to believe in the existence of these universal moral values? In light of atheism, does man’s conscience have actual value that paints morality with any level of objectivity? How is it possible to explain the innate tendency within people that these values are above and beyond their existence, allowing them to instinctively know what is good and what is evil? Historical atheist discourse recognised this problem. In the attempt to find a solution, it led to ideas such as nihilism, absurdism, and anarchism. They understood the problem and its implications, so they took them to their rational conclusion, ending up with these deviant philosophies of theirs, while fully cognisant of their implications in light of their materialistic and atheistic outlook on existence.

The problem nowadays is that atheists present themselves as humanists. They express a fair degree of moral hardness in their discourses regarding what they

⁶⁵ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 251.

believe to be right and wrong. However, they fail to clarify the rule upon which this moral hardness rests. When they do attempt to clarify, they either fall into the problem of a utilitarian and pragmatic justification of morality, in which morality loses its value altogether; or they fall into relativism, in which morality loses its universality. This causes the moral hardness they portray, and the zeal with which they claim moral values, to lose its justification. An assessment of their method in critiquing the practices they personally are not inclined to view positively would reveal this. It would also highlight the contradiction between the atheist outlook on the universe and moral practice.

To clarify, say we have four people. Two are theists who believe in God, the Final Abode (Afterlife), that man will be held to account for his actions, and that he will be recompensed with reward for good acts and with punishment for evil acts. The other two are atheists who do not believe in any recompense in the Afterlife; in fact, they do not believe in the Afterlife at all, nor the existence of God for that matter. One from each pairing adheres to good morals; the other two do not, but rather possess and perpetrate evil practices. We here pose the question: Which of these four is more aligned with his existential outlook on the universe? The answer is obvious: The moral conduct of the pious theist is more attuned to his existential outlook on the universe, which actually believes in the existence of universal morality. The conduct of the immoral theist is not attuned to his religious outlook. As for the atheist whose moral conduct appears to be good, it is not attuned in reality to his nihilistic outlook on the universe, as moral values therein would not be universal. Dr. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Masīrī has an interesting observation to this scenario, revealing some of our innermost thoughts on the topic. He says, ‘Humanist philosophy in the West, with its emphasis on universal moral values that transcend man’s natural and materialistic state, is an expression of the hidden god and the materialist’s unconscious search for holiness. These types of values...do not have any material foundation.’⁶⁶

I have personally witnessed a number of the youth affected by atheist doubts who argue about the existence of God. I asked them, ‘In light of your denial of God’s existence, how can you rationally or philosophically explain why you are morally responsible, as I think you are? In fact, how do you explain the existence of transcendent and universal moral values at all, in light of your denial?’ What would surprise me every time is how the other side was unable to comprehend the quagmire they were in, and how they *erroneously* believed – having denied the existence of God – that their denial was the end of their journey on this issue. They could not understand how their denial is actually just the *beginning* of a series of denials, in which they would be forced to deny a number of universal truths, such as the instinctive rational concepts, universal morality, the innate

⁶⁶ *Al-‘Ilmāniyyah al-Juz’iyyah wa al-‘Ilmāniyyah al-Shāmilah*, 1/189.

sense of purpose and free will, and man's value in and of himself, among other issues.

This type of problem explains why atheists tend to run away from discussing the question of morality's *ontology*, namely the philosophical question in relation to the *very existence* of moral values. We note that they attempt to change the question to one of *epistemology*: a question regarding *how* we can identify moral values. It is a strange tactic on their part, which I have unfortunately found them perpetrating in every debate that has touched upon the question of morality. For example, see the debate between William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens, the one between Frank Turek and Christopher Hitchens, the three-part debate between William Lane Craig and Lawrence Krauss, the debate between Trent Horn and Dan Barker, as well as many others to discover how they run away from the question.

The sole exception to this, which I have come across, was David Silverman's debate with Frank Turek. Silverman clearly said that any morality that is presumed to be natural, objective, or universal does not exist – all values that a person has are relative. When confronted with the implications of his view – like, among many examples, torturing children or cannibalising them is not universally wrong, but only relative to the person who believes it is wrong – all he could say was: 'Yes, this is not an easy question.'

We should understand that when we discuss moral philosophy, there are two important levels to the discussion:

1. Does universal morality exist or not?
2. How can we know about those moral values – if they indeed exist?

As the New Atheists can sense the problem arising from the first question in light of their atheist conceptualisation, you will see them repeatedly sidestep the question and spend all their efforts answering the second: 'How can we know good morals from bad ones? Is there a way to know about them outside the religious framework or not? Can the natural sciences help us solve this problem?' Yet the first question would remain unanswered. It represents a real problem for atheist philosophy.

In his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky writes that the prisoner Mitya said, 'But what will become of men then? Without God and immortal life? All things are lawful then, they can do what they like.'⁶⁷ In the same story, after a few pages, Mitya says,

It's God that's worrying me. That's the only thing that's worrying me. What if He doesn't exist? What if Rakitin's right – that it's an

⁶⁷ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 4/161.

idea made up by men? Then, if He doesn't exist, man is the chief of the Earth, of the universe. Magnificent! Only how is he going to be good without God? That's the question. I always come back to that. For whom is man going to love then? To whom will he be thankful? To whom will he sing the hymn? Rakitin laughs. Rakitin says that one can love humanity without God. Well, only a snivelling idiot can maintain that. I can't understand it. Life's easy for Rakitin. "You'd better think about the extension of civic rights, or even of keeping down the price of meat. You will show your love for humanity more simply and directly by that, than by philosophy." I answered him, "Well, but you, without a God, are more likely to raise the price of meat, if it suits you, and make a rouble on every kopeck." He lost his temper. But after all, what is goodness? Answer me that, Alexey. Goodness is one thing with me and another with a Chinaman, so it's a relative thing. Or isn't it? Is it not relative? A treacherous question! You won't laugh if I tell you it's kept me awake two nights. I only wonder now how people can live and think nothing about it.⁶⁸

A number of atheists have written to deal with this dangerous problem. However, they all sidestep the core of the issue, which reveals an utter incapacity on their part to answer this deep question. For example, look at Sam Harris's attempt to answer the question in his book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, in which he offered a perspective that can be summarised as follows: Morality raises the welfare of man. As science is able to tell us what can achieve welfare, it is therefore able to delineate good moral values from evil ones.

I am not going to tackle the issue of whether this tool is correct or not. A long debate can be held over to what extent science is effective in uncovering moral values, or whether science even has a position in this space at all. The fact is that all what Sam Harris did here was to construct a philosophical viewpoint for scientific abstracts, not that those abstracts engage with the question of morality *in and of itself*. Harris assumed a viewpoint on morality that is based on what advances the welfare of man as the essence and standard of the moral process. He did not offer any evidence – scientific or empirical – for why he chose this standard. The reason is obvious: Natural science per se cannot tell us whether this standard is correct or not. Although science can, to an extent, tell us what can contribute to the welfare of man, the assertion that 'contributing to the welfare of man is morally good' is not a scientific one, nor a scientifically demonstrable one. We shall discuss the unsuitability of the natural sciences as a moral standard when we come to examining detailed examples. It is indeed a very limited tool in its

⁶⁸ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 4/169.

ability to assist us in the topic. However, I want to highlight the impartiality of this book by answering the ontological question of morality.

There are works that attempt to answer the question, such as Michael Shermer's *The Science of Good and Evil*, Robert Hinde's *Why is Good Good?*, Robert Buckman's *Can We Be Good Without God?*, and Marc Hauser's *Moral Minds*. All these works adopt a Darwinist outlook to explain morality. Though they do not explicitly state it, they are on the verge of claiming that there is nothing called universal morality. And this is how their view should be, as the implication of the Darwinist approach in dealing with this question is that morality does not have any real universal existence; rather, it is like man, with the capacity to evolve and regress as per the trajectory of the universe. Man's moral conscience, they claim, is just an accident and does not possess any real objective value. For example, when a cat eats a mouse, it has not perpetrated any moral wrongdoing. This is how all human actions should be viewed in the Darwinist conceptualisation. In a social context, a person's criminal actions should not be considered immoral from an objective reading.

We can now see a noteworthy anomaly in atheist ideology. The most famous tools for the dissemination of atheism (such as the question of evil and divine justice, or denigrating faith based on evils perpetrated by its adherents) appear to be meaningless tools in a backdrop where God is considered to be non-existent. This is because good and evil have no presence except in light of God's existence. In reality, an atheist is unable to establish the foundation to deny the existence of God unless he acknowledges Him. This is a deep anomaly; in fact, it is a painful contradiction for them.

When we then come to look at the issue of setting the standards by which morality can be discerned from immoral values, and how the tools to identify both can be delineated, we find that there is a great deal of contention among atheists. Whereas Harris attempts to make science the source of knowing morality, Dawkins states, 'Science has no methods for deciding what is ethical. That is a matter for individuals and for society.'⁶⁹ In fact, Dawkins takes it a step further: 'Not all absolutism is derived from religion. Nevertheless, it is pretty hard to defend absolutist morals on grounds other than religious ones.'⁷⁰

Let us stay with Dawkins for a moment. Unlike other pioneers of New Atheism, he has the temerity to express the problems faced by atheism in this regard. In one of his discussions, he acknowledges the difficulties on the issue: 'What's to prevent us from saying Hitler wasn't right? I mean, that is a genuinely difficult question.'⁷¹ In another discussion, he says, 'I couldn't, ultimately, argue

⁶⁹ *A Devil's Chaplain*, p. 34.

⁷⁰ *The God Delusion*, p. 232.

⁷¹ <https://byfaithonline.com/richard-dawkins-the-atheist-evangelist/>

intellectually against somebody who did something I found obnoxious. I think I could finally only say, “Well, in this society you can’t get away with it” and call the police. I realize this is very weak, and I’ve said I don’t feel equipped to produce moral arguments in the way I feel equipped to produce arguments of a cosmological and biological kind. But I still think it’s a separate issue from beliefs in cosmic truths.’⁷² In fact, in another discussion, he went even further. When asked, ‘Ultimately, your belief that rape is wrong is as arbitrary as the fact that we’ve evolved five fingers rather than six’, his reply was: ‘You could say that, yeah.’⁷³

He clarifies this further in another discussion: ‘Well, one way to understand it is that, by accident, we have evolved a brain which is powerful enough to be able to look into the future and evaluate distant consequences. So, I can see that to spend my whole life satisfying selfish whims might make me less happy in the long run than if I spend it doing something else like helping other people. If you catch me giving money to Oxfam⁷⁴ and you say, “Why are you doing that?” and I can’t answer you, it doesn’t seem to me that I have in any way betrayed my belief in a godless cosmos. If you challenged me with a fossil rabbit which radioactive dating proved was 2000 million years old, that would really be worrying. That would, at a stroke, disprove evolution. Challenging me with being able to explain why I give money to charity, that doesn’t bother me very much.’⁷⁵ After all, Dawkins is the one who made the famous statement: ‘The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.’⁷⁶

These statements expose the fragility of his position on morality, and the lack of any principles upon which the existence of these values can be based. Dawkins’s problem is that he is ever ready to accuse others of moral deviance, just as he is prepared to describe actions he does not like as immoral. In fact, he says religion is evil and that Islam is the greatest evil in the world today. Yet it would seem from his statements that the universe does not have any inherent evil or good in it at all.

This is a brief summary of the theoretical problems associated with moral philosophy in atheism. When we explore the detailed application of morality in atheist thought, other problems will appear.

In a debate between Hamza Tzortzis and Lawrence Krauss held in Britain titled *Islam or Atheism: Which Makes More Sense?*, Tzortzis asked Krauss why incest is wrong. The audience gasped when he said, ‘It’s not clear to me that it’s

⁷² *The Simple Answer with Nick Pollard.*

⁷³ An interview with Justin Brierley on Premier Christian Radio’s *Unbelievable?* programme.

⁷⁴ Oxfam is a non-profit organisation that seeks to develop solutions to end global poverty.

⁷⁵ *The Simple Answer with Nick Pollard.*

⁷⁶ *River Out of Eden*, pp. 131-132.

wrong.’ He went on to clarify that this act has a societal and empirical taboo, as incest leads to genetic defects in children, which is why we have (as he says) developed to dislike it. As for the deed itself, he said that it was hard for him to find a moral justification to prevent it. For this reason, he said he did not see a problem for a brother and a sister to commit incest, so long as it is a one off and contraception is used as a precautionary measure. On this, Richard Dawkins tweeted, “‘Why is incest wrong?’ Islamist asked. [@LKrauss1](http://bit.ly/16vpiJG) tried to use REASON in his answer. Reason? Pearls before swine.’ Peter Singer went a step further, stating he saw no issue in bestiality so long as the rights of the animal are not violated. He made these comments in an open social discussion. Obviously, his remarks attracted huge criticism.⁷⁷ Related to this is the debate between William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens titled *Does God Exist?* When Hitchens was asked about this, he did not give a clear-cut answer like he typically used to do. He offered an off-topic remark and attempted to evade the question twice.⁷⁸ On the online *Eltwhed* forum, there is a thread by Muhammad al-Bāḥith titled ‘Scandalous atheist positions and criminal Darwinist morality (updated)’. In this, the thread author mentions a number of immoral assertions and deviant practices considered to be acceptable by some atheists.⁷⁹

As mentioned before, what magnifies the problematic nature of all these theories is their overzealousness in expressing their vision on morality, and critiquing opposing viewpoints to the extent that the uninitiated listener would start to think that the atheists have a universal moral system that everybody should adhere to. However, these atheists are completely unable to offer any rational or scientific justification for the existence of any absolute moral values.

I conclude this point with an example that highlights the overzealousness with which atheists approach this topic. According to Richard Dawkins, the religious upbringing of children is a form of abuse and conflicts with their human rights. The mere utterance to them that ‘God created the world’ is taking advantage of their innocence. One of his ten pieces of advice in his book *The God Delusion* states that children should not be taught anything religious.⁸⁰ He says elsewhere, ‘It’s one thing to say people should be free to believe whatever they like, but should they be free to impose their beliefs on their children? Is there something to be said for society stepping in? What about bringing up children to believe manifest falsehoods?’⁸¹

This issue took up a large part of his book. In fact, he dedicated an entire section to it. In it, he says, ‘Once, in the question time after a lecture in Dublin, I

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIEE653rYLM>

⁷⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tYm41hb48o>

⁷⁹ <https://www.eltwhed.com/vb/showthread.php?52441>

⁸⁰ *The God Delusion*, p. 264.

⁸¹ *The Church of the Non-Believers* by Gary Wolf, <https://www.wired.com/2006/11/atheism/>

was asked what I thought about the widely publicized cases of sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Ireland. I replied that, horrible as sexual abuse no doubt was, the damage was arguably less than the long-term psychological damage inflicted by bringing the child up Catholic in the first place. It was an off-the-cuff remark made in the heat of the moment, and I was surprised that it earned a round of enthusiastic applause from that Irish audience...

But I was reminded of the incident later when I received a letter from an American woman in her forties who had been brought up Roman Catholic. At the age of seven, she told me, two unpleasant things had happened to her. She was sexually abused by her parish priest in his car. And, around the same time, a little school friend of hers, who had tragically died, went to hell because she was a Protestant. Or so my correspondent had been led to believe by the then official doctrine of her parents' church. Her view as a mature adult was that, of these two examples of Roman Catholic child abuse, the one physical and the other mental, the second was by far the worst.⁸²

This is also the view of the other New Atheists: Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, Lawrence Krauss, and others.

What is really surprising is why Dawkins would remain silent over what civil society and the state should do to address this 'problem' of indoctrinating children, as he puts it. Why does he not explicitly call for decisive measures against this, such as imprisonment, fines, or intrusive supervision of parents who raise their children on religion? Considering that he believes that this act is abusing children's rights, and that the harm caused by this is far more than even sexual abuse meted out to them, he should be open about what should be done. The overzealous manner in which these ideas are being disseminated explains – to me at least – the type of action taken by fascist atheist regimes who had political power and were able to combat the 'evils of religion'. This petrifies me, as these sorts of ideas can be imported by groups that do not suffice with just loud voices, but in fact believe there is a need to make moves to finish off religious movements. This can be in the form of armed militia roaming the land to remove all traces of 'evil religion' by force. And according to them, the most evil manifestation of religion is Islam.⁸³

The summary that I wish to underscore is that the innate moral inclination and instinctive feeling that morality is natural, objective, and transcendent beyond the existence of man, is one of the proofs for Allah's existence ﷻ. Without Him, there would be no point to this type of moral inclination. In fact, there would be no

⁸² *The God Delusion*, p. 317.

⁸³ See the end of *Answering the New Atheism*, under the section 'King Richard', p. 143.

meaning to morality at all, as its objective transcendent value would have been negated.

Just as we comprehend through our senses the necessity of the external world's existence, we also feel the necessity of the existence of these absolute moral values. When we call out an oppressor by stating that his deed is oppression and immoral, we are expressing our deep belief that oppression is immoral. This belief transcends our personal feelings. It reveals our deep conscience in that there are values that are above and beyond our own selves. We can instinctively feel that harming children and perpetrating injustice and oppression are absolutely immoral. It is not a tendency that came as a result of mere personal upbringing or societal conditioning. Rather, these types of practices are described as being absolute and constant by the instinctive rational concepts.

The atheist philosopher, Michael Ruse, said it well: 'The man who says that it is morally acceptable to rape little children, is just as mistaken as the man who says that $2 + 2 = 5$.'⁸⁴ Obviously, the problem lies in how morality is viewed in light of atheism. It is like a child dragging a cat from its tail. Its mother tells them not to do this. The child asks, 'Why?' She answers: 'Because it hurts the cat.' The child asks, 'What is the problem in hurting it?' She says, 'Because it is wrong to hurt any animal without cause or advantage gained.' The child keeps going on: 'Why is it wrong to hurt an animal without cause?' The mother ends up frustrated and proclaims: 'It is wrong. End of.'

Indeed – it is wrong, end of. However, where did this mistake of dragging a cat from its tail acquire its objective value of being wrong that is independent of us? This is the question that atheist movements are unable to offer an answer.

It is possible to fashion this point into an argument for the existence of God. So, if God did not exist, then objective moral values would not exist. However, objective moral values do exist by necessity – therefore, God exists.

Third level: Instinct

When I embarked the world of reading, one of the first books I read was by Shawkiy Abu Khalil titled *Gharīzah am Taqdīr Ilāhī?* (*Instinct or Divine Decree?*). This book adopts wonderful scenes from the animal world, in which animals instinctively carry out specific actions that are in their survival interests, without ever being educated, trained, or brought up to do so.

Who guided a child to take the breast of its mother? Who planted the instinct of motherhood in a mother's heart, so that she looks after her children? Who taught birds to migrate between specific places? Who instilled the survival instinct in all living things? Who imprinted the love of beauty in the soul? All these

⁸⁴ *Darwinism Defended*, p. 275.

phenomena, like their predecessors that are innately found in living humans and creatures, beg the question: How did these instincts come about? Who created them in the soul? Ask the atheist about them. He will go on about Darwinism and how these instincts were part and parcel of the evolution process for the purpose of survival of living creatures. However, the question remains: Where did these instincts come from in the first place? In other words, in light of Darwinist evolution, how did this instinct come about, which at a point of time during evolution did not exist, only to appear all of a sudden in such a deeply embedded manner within creature's souls? When exactly did these instincts first appear? How did they form? And how are they generationally passed down? Atheists have no answer to these questions. The only thing they have is either to express their utter confoundment or to bring this discussion back to the selfish gene⁸⁵ that pushes a living being to survive at any cost. We can only dance to its tune, which is how Richard Dawkins famously puts it.

Ponder over a mother's instinct. Pray tell me – have you seen anything purer than that? I swear by Allah, there is nothing in existence like a mother's heart – a symbol of true love and perfect compassion. I ask you by Allah to remind yourself of the stories of mothers with their children – they are endless wonders that words are unable to describe.

As I write these words, I am confronted by dozens of stories:

- A son stabs his mother, but she intercedes on his behalf so that no harm comes his way.
- Another abandons ever visiting his mother – she has no hope left in life other than to drag herself to him in order to see him.
- A paraplegic son has an elderly mother who looks after him in spite of her age.
- A mother's daughter died. Her heart was transplanted into another woman. Imagine you were there to see the tears rolling down her face as she heard the heartbeat of her daughter's heart inside another person through a stethoscope.

These stories and others are in the millions. Every mother has her own story with her child. Every story has a case of love that deserves telling.

Conversely, the callousness of Darwinism would like to render all of this into mere utilitarian mechanical movements, subject to the whims of the selfish gene. In other words, there is no real love that preoccupies a mother's heart, but rather it is selfishness that engulfs her genes as she is engulfed by her selfish desire to survive through that child. It is a bleak and meaningless picture. It robs people of everything that is of meaning to them, and of anything that is precious to them.

⁸⁵ *The Selfish Gene* is actually the name of a book written by Richard Dawkins.

Man can rise above his personal inclinations and his desire to survive. He is able to escape the fierce grip of Darwinism. He can use his inclination to boot evolution out of contention. He can make a sacrifice for someone else, even if it means sacrificing his own self.

Yet, a Darwinist⁸⁶ would come to tell us that he is personally ready to lay down his life for two brothers or eight cousins. You may ask: Why these specific numbers? And how can one explain the point of sacrifice in Darwin's theory? It is quite simple: The selfish gene will be able to maintain his identity through these two brothers; it will need a larger pool of cousins to guarantee the survival of his genes and identity through them. This is how a supposedly enlightened human – enlightened only by the dark theory of the Darwinist selfish gene theory – explains what sacrifice means in Darwinist theory. An acceptable explanation for these instincts can only be attained when we believe in the existence of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ is the One Who gifted them. A mother's mercy, for example, is but a very tiny part of Allah's mercy, which He placed within His creatures, by which the entirety of His creation shows mercy among themselves.

During his discussion with Pharaoh, Mūsā ﷺ alluded to the instinctive element in all of creation – and the one who placed those in them. Allah says, 'Pharaoh asked, "Who then is the Lord of you two, O Moses?"'⁸⁷ 'He replied that it was their Lord Who created all of creation, gave every creation an image suitable for it – large, medium, or small – all of which points to His great work of art, as well as the rest of His attributes. Mūsā ﷺ then said, "...then He guided"⁸⁸ every creation to that which He created it for. This general guidance is observable in all creations. You can see every creation striving for benefit and warding off harm from itself. It is not just humans who do this, for Allah ﷻ even placed a degree of intellect in animals, whereby they can be seen doing this, as per the statement of Allah ﷻ: "Who has perfected everything He created."⁸⁹

Consequently, the One Who created all of creation, balanced them all so beautifully that minds cannot envisage anything more beautifully calibrated, and guided them to what is in their interests is the real Lord. Denying Him would be denying the greatest of all existence. It would be extreme arrogance, obstinance, and a false proclamation. Even if we were to assume a person denied all known things in front of us, his denial of the Lord of the Worlds would be even worse than that. This is why when Pharaoh could not counter this conclusive evidence, he resorted to whataboutery and evaded the

⁸⁶ Translator's note: WD Hamilton and his rule on kin selection are being alluded to here.

⁸⁷ *Tāhā*, 48.

⁸⁸ *Tāhā*, 50.

⁸⁹ *Al-Sajdah*, 7.

subject: “Pharaoh asked, ‘And what about previous peoples?’”⁹⁰, i.e., what is their state? What is their news? Is there any update on them? They too denied God, disbelieved, oppressed, were stubborn – are we simply just not following them?⁹¹

In his book on exegesis, Ibn al-Jawzī said, ‘On Allah’s statement “...then He guided”⁹² are three views: 1) He guided how a male approaches a female; 2) He guided to marriage, food, and shelter; and 3) He guided everything to its sustenance. Mujāhid said this. If one raises the objection of how this demonstrates a proof against Pharaoh, the answer is that creation and guidance are known to exist, so there must be a Creator and Guide.’⁹³ One example that Allah ﷻ related in the Holy Qur’an in this regard is: ‘And your Lord inspired the bees: “Make your homes in the mountains, the trees, and in what people construct.”’⁹⁴

Fourth level: Teleological tendency

Another innate tendency present in man is his deep emotional sense of purpose, or teleological tendency. It is this feeling that makes him ask the big questions: ‘Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where will I end up?’ These deep questions are what distinguish humans from animals. If animals desire to move on their primal instincts, what moves man is his innate tendency to seek out the purpose of his existence and life. This is why the truest of names are *Hārith* (ploughman) and *Hammām* (energetic worker), as stated by the Prophet ﷺ⁹⁵, as they comprise of two central features of man that represent his desire to wish and to seek. These two traits are not possible without the existence of something that can be wished and sought after. The ultimate aim that can be sought is Allah ﷻ.

It is as Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ said: ‘The soul cannot be vacant of feeling and want. In fact, such vacantness is impossible in the soul. Feeling and want are part and parcel of its reality. A soul cannot be envisaged without feeling and wanting. It is not correct to say that the soul can be vacant of the Creator ﷻ – vacant of feeling either His existence or non-existence, or of His love or lack thereof. It is not correct to say that acknowledging Him and His love is not a necessary part of the soul’s existence, even if unopposed. Rather, this is false, because the soul carries what it desires as a necessary part of its *fiṭrah*. Because the soul always *wants* as a necessary function of its essence, it cannot be envisaged that a person’s soul can

⁹⁰ *Tāhā*, 51.

⁹¹ *Tafsīr al-Sa‘dī*, p. 506.

⁹² *Tāhā*, 50.

⁹³ *Zād al-Masīr*, 4/305.

⁹⁴ *Al-Naḥl*, 68.

⁹⁵ Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, hadith no. 4952 – declared authentic by Albānī.

ever be vacant of wanting something. ‘This is why the Prophet ﷺ said, “The truest of names are *Hārith* and *Hammām*.”’

The soul after all is a living creature – every living creature moves of its own volition. Therefore, the soul must have movement that it wills for itself. Thus, every “wishing entity” must have something it wishes for. Whatever is wished is either for itself per se, or it is as a means to something else; something wished as a means to something else must inevitably lead to the primary wish. Therefore, it is impossible that all of a person’s wishes are a means to something else, as that would lead to the fallacy of serial infinity of final causes, which is impossible, just like – or even more so than – the serial infinity of efficient causes. Given that man must have something he wants, it is ultimately Allah that his heart yearns for. Therefore, every servant must have a god. It is thus learned that the servant is predispositioned to love his god.⁹⁶

This state of man, and those questions to which he is predispositioned to explore, would be absolutely pointless in light of atheism. If man is the result of an accident and the random coincidence of matter and time, such questions would be without value; in fact, they would be utterly meaningless. This is explicitly mentioned by Richard Dawkins and other atheists who ridicule these great questions. And yes, these questions would indeed be ridiculous from an atheist viewpoint.

Their state is very close to the early polytheists, as Allah says, ‘And they argue, “There is nothing beyond our worldly life. We die; others are born. And nothing destroys us but the passage of time.”’⁹⁷ So if our final destination is death and nothing else, and if there is no god after that, life would really be meaningless. This inclination in our souls – to search for the ultimate purpose of life – is merely an absurd inclination. Otherwise, in light of atheism, what is the real difference between whether I, humankind, or the universe exist or not? Is there any explanation for this innate tendency?

The Mahjari poet Elia Abu Madi (Īliyā Abū Mādī) has a great piece of poetry, in which he depicted this confusion. His lengthy ode, *Qaṣīdah al-Ṭalāsīm*, evokes pain and confusion. He starts it off with this:

I have come. I don't know where from. But I have come.

I saw a path in front of me, so I walked.

I shall continue to walk, whether I like it or not.

⁹⁶ *Dar' Ta'ārūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 8/463.

⁹⁷ *Al-Jāthiyah*, 24.

How did I come? How did I see my path?

I don't know.

Am I new or ancient in this existence?

Am I free or a prisoner in shackles?

Am I leading my own life or am I being led?

I wish I knew, but...

I don't.

And my path. What is my path? Is it long or short?

Am I ascending, or am I falling into it and drowning?

Am I traversing down the path, or is it the path that is traversing?

Or is it that we are both still and it is time that is moving?

I do not know.

I wonder if I am a trustworthy keeper of secrets.

Do you think I knew I was buried in it?

And that I would emerge and come into existence?

Or do you think I understood nothing?

I do not know.

What do you say about the time before I became an upright human?

Do you think I was nothing, or do you think I was something?

Is there a solution to this balderdash, or will it remain forever?

I do not know. I do not know why.

I do not know.⁹⁸

In atheism, life would almost be like the play *Waiting for Godot*, written by Samuel Beckett. It comprises of a two-way inconsequential discussion between two actors, who are waiting for a third man who never arrives. This is almost exactly how our lives would be – killing time without aim or purpose. This was acknowledged by the most ardent of pioneers of the anarchic, nihilistic, and absurdist schools of atheism.

However, atheists today want to leapfrog this problem with an overly simplified solution. They claim that although man came about as a result of coincidence and random movement of matter, he can still set his personal goals. What they want to tell us is this: ‘Yes, on a theoretical level, we believe that there

⁹⁸ *Dīwān ʿIlīyā Abū Mādī*, p. 191.

is no aim, goal, or point to life. However, we do not carry this theoretical view into practice, as life as such would not have been possible. Rather, what we strive to do is to *forge* some purpose in life. In other words, we dupe ourselves into believing that there is some goal for us to live.’

Fifth level: The tendency for free will

A feature of humans is that they instinctively feel within themselves the differentiation between man’s choices and those acts that emanate involuntarily from him. When a person raises a glass of water to his mouth, picks up his bag, or gets in his car, he can instinctively differentiate between those and his heart pulsing, the blood running in his veins, and the cold shivers his body feels. A person can stop breathing for a while by choice, but he is unable to continue to do so, as the involuntary bodily reaction requires him to breath. This innate tendency – that people have free will, which they can instinctively feel – requires an explanation. In fact, the existence of this tendency requires an explanation.

It would seem that atheism, in light of its materialistic outlook on existence, is unable to offer a plausible explanation for the phenomenon of free will. If our voluntary actions are merely and exclusively the result of biochemical interactions and electric pulses in the body’s neuromuscular system, and that is all governed by fixed laws, how is it possible for there to be any free will? This has led many atheists to adopt an extreme determinist philosophy. In this conceptualisation, free will is an illusion and man is actually programmed to do what he does, even though he might think he has free will. In classical Arabic literature, one determinist expressed this as ‘Man is programmed with an image of one with free will’.

In his book *Free Will*, Sam Harris says, ‘My choices matter – and there are paths towards making wiser ones – but I cannot choose what I choose. And if it ever appears that I do – for instance, after going back between two options – I do not choose to choose what I choose. There is a regress here that always ends in darkness.’⁹⁹ This position was well received by the atheist rank and file, and even by those with a materialistic outlook on the world who have reservations on atheism. What Harris said in the beginning of the book suffices in learning about his position: ‘Free will *is* an illusion.’¹⁰⁰ He goes on to say, ‘Free will is actually more than an illusion (or less)¹⁰¹, in that it cannot be made conceptually coherent.’¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Free Will*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ *Free Will*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ What he means is that it is worse than just an illusion. He believes that free will is even more of a remote possibility than an illusion. He argues that it is not logically coherent from a conceptual perspective.

¹⁰² *Free Will*, p. 5.

In his book *The Science of Good and Evil*, Michael Shermer tackled the issue of free will in a dedicated section. Having discussed the complexity of influences and factors that contribute to a person making a specific choice, he said, ‘The number of causes and the complexity of their interactions make the predetermination of human action pragmatically impossible. We can even put a figure on the causal net of the universe to see just how absurd it is to think we can get our minds fully around it. Tulane University theoretical physicist Frank Tipler has calculated that in order for a computer in the far future of the universe to resurrect in a virtual reality every person who ever lived or could have lived, with all causal interactions between themselves and their environment, it would need 10 to the power of 10 to the power of 123 bits (a 1 followed by 10^{123} zeros) of memory. An entity capable of this would be, for all intents and purposes, omniscient and omnipotent, and this is what Tipler calls the Omega Point, or God. Suffice it to say that no computer within the conceivable future will achieve this level of power; likewise no human brain even comes close. Thus, as far as we are concerned, the causal net will always be full of holes. Therefore, in the language of this model: human freedom is action taken with an ignorance of causes within a conjuncture of events that compels and is compelled to a certain course of action by constraining prior conditions. To that extent we may act as if we are free.’¹⁰³ This is clear in its implication that free will is a mere illusion, and that when our deeds appear, it might seem that we are free in what we do, although in reality, we are not.

In the final part of the trilogy of debates between Lawrence Krauss and William Lane Craig, the question of free will came up. Krauss evaded the topic and did not offer a clear answer. However, he did – after some pressure – allude to ideas similar to those championed by Shermer in the previous citation, revealing that he is in total agreement with hard determinism, even though he was embarrassed to say it explicitly. As for Christopher Hitchens, he has an interesting answer to the question. When asked, ‘Do you have free will?’, his reply was: ‘Yes I have free will – I have no choice but to have it.’

In his debate with the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, Richard Dawkins was hesitant on the topic of free will, though he was bolder than Krauss. He stated that his materialistic outlook on the world led him to incline to the view that there is no such thing as free will, though he stressed that he had not given the issue much thought. Nevertheless, in his *River Out of Eden*, Dawkins has a famous passage that is indicative of his position: ‘DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.’¹⁰⁴ In other words, what motivates man is the selfish survivalist gene, and we can only dance to its rhythm and tune.

¹⁰³ *The Science of Good and Evil*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ *River Out of Eden*, p. 133.

Daniel Dennett has a book called *Freedom Evolves*, in which he offered his perspective. His view is opposed to Harris's extreme view in negating free will altogether. In philosophical circles, Dennett's view is known as compatibilism – a hybrid of absolute free will and hard determinism. It argues that it is possible to marry the two without falling into self-conflict. In my estimation, this view is one that is more of soft determinism than it is about believing in true free will. Coincidentally, Harris severely critiqued compatibilism in his book *Free Will*.

There is no doubt that the purely materialistic view on existence and life can throw up such ludicrous concepts on human free will. In this view, the whole universe is governed by strict, unchangeable laws. Man – with all his feelings, emotions, and his very being – cannot escape its grip; rather, his choices and wishes are but biochemical reactions administered by the brain. Even if he thinks he has choice, that choice has already been programmed into him.

The implications of determinism are both numerous and dangerous. It raises problems on morality and questions on individual responsibility. So, if criminals are programmed to do what they do, what is then the moral justification to punish them? If good people are programmed to be good, what is the moral justification to recompense them, thank them, and praise them? What is the moral justification to resent evil perpetrated by humans? In atheism, all of these would be programmed routines that bring about predetermined actions, from which man cannot separate himself. In fact, how would an atheist justify – in light of determinism – proselytising for atheism? A believer would have already been programmed to believe, and likewise an atheist to disbelieve. So why then this zealotry when inviting people to atheism, when in reality there is no true freedom for man to choose? What is the moral justification to acquire knowledge and science when a person cannot discern between right and wrong, given that he has no free will? A person would simply be moved and pushed to a particular set of results, regardless of the nature of those results and whether they can be described as right or wrong.

In the beginning of his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, Francis Crick said, 'The Astonishing Hypothesis is that "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 behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll's Alice might have phrased it: "You're nothing but a pack of neurons." This hypothesis is so alien to the ideas of most people alive today that it can truly be called astonishing.'¹⁰⁵

Imagine if Crick instead wrote this in the beginning of his book: 'The Astonishing Hypothesis is that every scientific conclusion in this book that I have derived was not the result of true free will. In fact, it is no more than the behavior

¹⁰⁵ *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, p. 3.

of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.’ Would such conclusions have any scientific or cognitive value to them?

Is it not intriguing that Sam Harris is prepared to write an entire book on free will to convince us that it does not exist, and that man is subject to hard determinism? Why would there be any value to those letters and words then when he constructed them without his own free will? Based on this theory, he did not construct anything rational; rather, they are just a bunch of letters that were cobbled together as a result of biochemical processes whose agenda is not to seek out the truth, let alone to arrive at it.

After all of this, it is the irony of ironies that atheists label themselves ‘free thinkers’ as an expression of their ideological identity, when it is their atheist view that is unable to offer any scientific rule upon which it is possible to build any intellectual activity, never mind their clear denial of human free will, without which there would not be objective value to any intellectual activity. In light of their view, man is neither a thinker nor free. Is it also not strange that atheists are overly zealous to stamp the illusion of God out of existence and replace it with atheist ideas, yet at the same time, they are not so keen to disabuse people from the illusion of free will?

All of this reveals the danger of the view of atheists vis-à-vis existence. It is a view laden with chasms and holes. The source of this is atheism’s denial of God. It is a type of pure nihilism that dominates the scene when the Lord is taken out of the equation of existence. It is therefore incorrect to confine the debate of this phenomenon to the limits of questions on the Creator. Rather, there should be a detailed study into the implications and impact of denying God’s existence on cognitive structures, one’s outlook on the universe, one’s position on the questions of purpose, values, morality, as well as other issues.

Allah is not the only illusion according to atheism. Morality is an illusion; human free will is an illusion; self-conscience is an illusion; the meaning and purpose of existence is an illusion; the basic rational concepts are an illusion; man’s spiritual existence is an illusion; and the question of the reality of humanity is an illusion. It is as the atheist Will Provine, former Professor of Life Sciences at Cornell University, stated: ‘No Gods, no life after death, no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life, and no human free will are all deeply connected to an evolutionary perspective. You’re here today and then gone tomorrow, and that’s all there is to it.’ He adds: ‘And I immediately began to doubt the existence of the deity. But it starts by giving up an active deity. Then he gives up the hope that there’s any life after death. When you give those two up, the rest of it follows fairly easily. You give up the hope that there’s an eminent morality. And finally, there’s no human free will. If you believe in evolution, you can’t hope for there being any free will. There’s no hope whatsoever of there being any

deep meaning in human life. We live, we die, and we're gone. We're absolutely gone when we die.'¹⁰⁶

We close this section on this final point. In summary, the soul bears an imprint that requires man to recognise his Lord ﷻ, acknowledge His perfection, and appreciate that he is in need of Him. Allah ﷻ placed imprints on the soul that point to Him. If a man does not hold onto what the *fiṭrah* points to, he will inevitably fall into the sea of confusion and bewilderment. The *fiṭrah* can be tainted by doubts and objections, in which case rational evidence is needed to help man rediscover his innate predisposition. We shall discuss this latter point in more detail in the coming sections.

¹⁰⁶ Transcript from 2008 documentary *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*.

Chapter 3

ARGUMENT FROM LOGIC FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH

In the previous chapter, it was highlighted that the cognition of the Lord ﷻ within the *fiṭrah* precedes analysis and reasoning. The imprint on the soul requires a man to acknowledge Him, ﷻ, so long as his senses are of sound nature and the impediments are absent. In the event where a person falls prey to doubt or heedlessness, logic has a role in shoring up *fiṭrah*-based cognition by reminding the soul. Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘There is no mutual conflict between instinctive self-evident knowledge and possession of evidence that supports it.’¹⁰⁷

Revelation points out the main rational arguments in this issue and others. If we contemplate how revelation deals with this issue, we observe a number of points:

1. The tools of logic-based reasoning in the Qur’an and the prophetic tradition are distinctly simple and clear. They are easy to digest and are in absolute alignment with *fiṭrah*.

These tools are the most beneficial of rational proofs and are congruent with most souls. ‘Rational proof that is easy to grasp and digest, and is apparent to the mind, is more likely to be trusted.’¹⁰⁸ Ibn Rushd reveals the simplicity of the proofs in revelation, and how they efficiently lead a person to the goal. He said, ‘When the religious methods are contemplated, most are found to comprise of two characteristics: they are conclusive, and they are simple and not compounds, i.e., they are few in terms of their propositions. Therefore, their conclusions would be closely aligned to their propositions.’¹⁰⁹

2. Abundance and variety.

This is a facilitation granted by Allah ﷻ to His servants. Ibn Taymiyyah ﷻ said, ‘The more people are in need of knowing something, Allah facilitates for them the evidence for its knowledge, such as the proofs for knowing Who He is,

¹⁰⁷ *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, p. 572.

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Qā’id ilā Taṣḥīḥ al-‘Aqā’id*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāḥij al-Adillah*, p. 116.

the proofs of His Messenger's prophethood, the proofs of His power and knowledge, etc. Such proofs are numerous and conclusive.'¹¹⁰

One aspect of the argument from logic for the existence of God is that the effect is indicative of the cause, and revelation came to remind us of this argument with various wordings and in multiple contexts. With this in mind, it is then possible to prove Him ﷻ through His entire creation, as they are all one of His effects, ﷻ. The effect being indicative of the cause is an umbrella argument for numerous sub-arguments, which number the amount of variety found in the creation. It is as Ibn Rushd said as he commented on the argument from invention for the existence of the Creator: 'And in this type are many indicators as per the number of invented things.'¹¹¹ In fact, 'there is no creation that is not in itself a sign pointing to its Creator, in a manner which disallows any partnership associated unto Him'.¹¹²

The poet Abū al-‘Atāhiyyah ﷻ said:

*'Lo, we are all going to become obsolete
Who from the children of Adam can remain forever?
Their origin is from their Lord
And everyone shall return unto his Lord
Alas, how can the Divine be disobeyed?
And how can He be denied?
Allah has in every motion
And in every stationary moment a testament
And in everything He has a sign
Pointing out that He is the One.'*

It is clear, therefore, that the statement 'Allah has ways unto Him to the tune of all the breaths taken by the creation' is not far off from the truth.¹¹³

3. The Qur'an mostly deals with this issue by way of implication and *argumentum a fortiori*.

Most proofs in the Qur'an mentioned to demonstrate His existence are presented to prove a wider point, such as His oneness, ﷻ in lordship and divinity. Such verses point out Allah's existence *by necessary implication*. Since these verses are presented to prove the oneness of Allah ﷻ and relate some of His

¹¹⁰ *Dar' Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 10/129.

¹¹¹ *Al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah*, p. 119.

¹¹² *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, p. 583.

¹¹³ See Ibn Taymiyyah's detail on this in *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 10/454.

perfect attributes, then they are also offering proof for His existence *by implication*. This method of evidence is *argumentum a fortiori*, as is evident.

To highlight an example, Allah ﷻ says, ‘Say, O Prophet, “Should I seek a lord other than Allah while He is the Lord of everything?”’¹¹⁴ So, for Allah to be the Lord of everything denotes that He is associated with the attributes of ultimate dominion, creation, and planning. This reveals that the Qur’an’s concern was spent not solely on proving Allah’s existence, but rather to introduce the creation to its Creator, reveal His perfect attributes, and explain the reverence, glorification, and monotheistic worship that He deserves. As for the mere cognition of the creation that they have a Lord that created and that they are in need of His existence, then that is already imprinted onto their *fiṭrah*.

4. Through its various wordings, revelation seeks to stimulate and remind man of the element of *fiṭrah*.

The Qur’an evokes the soul’s desire to adopt means in the various situations man faces in order to achieve a desired outcome. For example, Allah ﷻ says, ‘To those who disbelieve in the Hereafter belong all evil qualities, whereas to Allah belong the finest attributes. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.’¹¹⁵ It also reminds the servant of his rightful place in front of his Lord and his need for Him when calamity befalls: ‘He is the One Who enables you to travel through land and sea. And it so happens that you are on ships, sailing with a favourable wind, to the passengers’ delight. Suddenly, the ships are overcome by a gale wind and those on board are overwhelmed by waves from every side, and they assume they are doomed. They cry out to Allah alone in sincere devotion, “If You save us from this, we will certainly be grateful.”’¹¹⁶ The Qur’an also says, ‘Whenever someone is touched by hardship, they cry out to Us, whether lying on their side, sitting, or standing. But when We relieve their hardship, they return to their old ways as if they had never cried to Us to remove any hardship! This is how the misdeeds of the transgressors have been made appealing to them.’¹¹⁷

Components of the argument from logic:

If we analyse the nature of the rational proof that points to the existence of Allah ﷻ, we will observe that it is made up of two key components:

1. Instinctive innate concepts.
2. Observation and the senses.

First component: Concepts that are innate and necessary

¹¹⁴ *Al-An ‘ām*, 164.

¹¹⁵ *Al-Nahl*, 60.

¹¹⁶ *Yūnus*, 22.

¹¹⁷ *Yūnus*, 12.

These arguments that prove Allah’s existence are instinctive realities that are innate to man, like the impropriety of preponderance without a cause for preponderance, an effect’s need for a cause, and the principle of causality. Other proofs stem from these arguments. Thus, the existence of something after having been non-existent leads to the question on causality and preponderance: What exactly gave preponderance for the existence of this entity over its non-existence? What was the cause to take it out from nothingness into the world of existence? Likewise, the immaculate design in the construct of the world is an effect that requires a cause, and so on.

The presence of this innate component makes this type of argument extremely widespread and easy to understand. It led the Bedouin to utter his famous phrase: ‘Camel dung points to camels. Footprints indicate travel. So the sky with its constellations and the Earth with its valleys – why do they not point to the Sublime, the Omniscient?’

Second component: Observation and the senses

These pick up the observable and perceptible imagery and phenomena of the world. Logic is applied on these observations, enabling a person to derive conclusions – this is the fruit of the evidence-based reasoning process. Creations who understand that the senses point to Allah ﷻ know that they are one of His effects. From this viewpoint, each type of creation in Arabic is called ‘*ālam*’ (literally: world). Ibn Taymiyyah discusses why ‘*ālam*’ is called ‘*ālam*’: ‘*Ālam* is that which gives knowledge, like *khātam* is that which is used to seal...Each category of creation is called ‘*ālam*’ as it is a sign and proof for the Creator – as opposed to ‘*ālim*’, who is one who knows, just like *khātim*, who is the one who seals. He ﷻ said, “...but is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets”¹¹⁸ because he was the seal to them.’

Though all creations are indicative of Him ﷻ, they vary in their level of indication. Though inanimate objects are indicative of Allah ﷻ, their indication is less than that of living creations. There is a difference between the indication to Allah ﷻ by a pebble and that of a human. Part of the varying levels of indication goes back to the nature of matter (the subject area for reasoning) and the nature of the observer (the reasoner).

Setting the basis for the possibility of rationally proving the existence of Allah

Though the theist viewpoint on the cognition of Allah ﷻ being innate is clear, and that it is possible to leverage rational proofs to remind man of that innate

¹¹⁸ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 40.

predisposition and to gain contentment in that regard, the arena of argument in circles of philosophy is this: Is it possible to offer rational reasoning for Allah's existence ﷻ or not?

One finds three positions on this: possible; against; and middle positions that are either confused or hesitant to incline either way. Agnostics, for example, do not have a position on the existence of the Divine – they neither accept nor reject His existence. Though some of them are of this view because they feel the evidence on both sides cancel each other out, others of this view state that their agnosticism is because it is impossible for human cognition to arrive at any firm conclusion in this matter. They claim that our cognitive tools are unable to offer any answer to the question of God's existence. This position negates the possibility that the question of God's existence can be answered.

Before we delve into discussing the details of the proofs that are indicative of His existence, we should quickly deal with the issue of the scope of possibility of knowing God through rational proofs. Can we use our cognitive powers to arrive at an answer in this regard? Though humans who believe in God do not do so by way of empirical or direct sensory means, that has not prevented them from having faith in Him. They believe on the basis of a) the requirement of the *fitrah*, and b) various rational arguments. This is in addition to the evidence brought by the Prophets and Messengers that point not only to His existence but His perfect attributes.

To clarify that Allah ﷻ can be recognised rationally, it should be noted that everything in existence is one of two types:

- Perceptible through the senses.
- Imperceptibles.

Knowledge of the former can be acquired through the senses. As for the imperceptibles, the knowledge of some can be acquired; some may not. Therefore, it is possible to acquire the knowledge of the existence of some imperceptibles via logic.

When logic determines that something can possibly exist, actualising the knowledge of its existence in the real world requires a more enhanced indicator that would bring that entity out from the realm of the *possible* to the realm of the *actual*. This indicator might be a form of transmitted information that leads to its knowledge. For example, a car accident in front of your house is rationally possible, but acquiring the knowledge of the actual event requires direct observation or authentic news.

The knowledge of imperceptibles in existence can be acquired via a number of ways, such as authentic reports, or by a remnant. This is the key to answering the central question in this section: It is possible to derive the existence of the

cause from the effect. In the example of the car accident, its existence can be assumed based on the accident remnants and the effects that came after it. Being cognisant of this opens up the door for logic to be able to comprehend the existence of the Creator via the effects He causes.

Highlighting the possibility of gaining knowledge of imperceptibles via their effects, Ghazālī رحمته الله said, ‘It should be known that we have seen existing entities and their reality. They are categorised into those which are perceptible, and those which are known by reasoning, but cannot be engaged with through the senses. The perceptibles are those that are acquired by the five senses, such as: colours (and likewise the knowledge of shapes and quantities) by the sense of sight; noises by the sense of hearing; flavours by the sense of taste; odours by the sense of smell; and roughness, smoothness, softness, cold, warmth, moisture, and dryness by the sense of touch. These entities and other related things are sensorily engaged with, i.e., the power to learn about them is from the senses per se.

‘On the other hand, the existence of some entities is learned and proven through their effects – they are not understood or acquired by the five senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch). For example, these sensory tools themselves: They are indeed powers to acquire knowledge, but they themselves cannot be detected by any of the senses – or the imagination for that matter. Likewise, the same is said for power, knowledge, will, fear, shyness, obsession, anger, and all the traits that we can most certainly detect in others, and this is through a method of reasoning that does not involve our senses. So, whoever writes in front of us, we would be convinced – based on his action – that he has some capability and knowledge of writing and has the will for it. Our certainty of the existence of this is equal to our certainty of the movements of his sensing hand and how black ink is organised into letters on white paper, even though the latter can be seen and the former cannot. In fact, most things in existence are known by the evidence of their effects and cannot be sensed.’¹¹⁹

Based on this, we can conclude that the connection of existing entities to cognition and human understanding is of three levels:

1. Things in existence whose knowledge can be acquired by directly sensing them.
2. Things in existence that do not fall under the direct purview of the senses, though knowledge of them can be gained via their effects, in which case logic would have a role to play in their understanding, and knowledge of them would be via the combination of the senses and logic.
3. Things in existence that do not fall under the purview of the senses, nor does logic have any role to play in their cognition,

¹¹⁹ *Mi ‘yār al- ‘Ilm fī Fann al-Manṭiq*, p. 56.

whether by the effects of those existing entities or by analogising them to other things in existence. So, if these particular existing entities do not come our way via truthful reports that reveal they indeed exist, there would be no pathway to understanding or knowing their existence.

As per the source of knowledge of the entities in existence, the technical term for the first is the perceptibles; the second is rational entities; and the third is scriptural entities. If we ponder over our state and our cognition of our Creator ﷻ, this would be via both levels two and three. Affirming the existence of Allah ﷻ and the core aspects of His perfect attributes can be acquired rationally, yet He has perfect attributes that rationality would be unable to reveal save via revelation. In fact, Allah ﷻ has perfect attributes that logic is unable to conceptualise, even if revelation for them came. On this lattermost scenario, Ibn Taymiyyah says, ‘Negating mutual similarity might comprise of affirming attributes of perfection for the Creator without affording any of the same for the creation. So just as there are attributes of the creation that are not affirmed for the Creator, then likewise there are attributes of the Creator that are not affirmed for the creation. However, people do not have the capability of knowing this type in the world, which is why it is not mentioned.’¹²⁰

Among the scholars who discussed the issue of the possibility of rationally knowing Allah is Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, in his encyclopaedic book *Mawqif al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm wa al-‘Ālam min Rabb al-‘Ālamīn wa-‘Ibādih al-Mursalīn* (*The Stance of Logic, Knowledge, and the World on the Lord of the Worlds and His Messenger Servants*). In this book, he scrutinised the views of the famous philosopher, Immanuel Kant.¹²¹

With this preface now complete, we can now discuss the most salient rational pathways that lead to Allah ﷻ.

¹²⁰ *Dar’ Ta‘ārūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 10/246.

A good reference point for this issue which I benefited from is Su‘ūd al-‘Arīfī’s *al-Adillah al-‘Aqliyyah al-Naqliyyah*.

¹²¹ *Mawqif al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm wa al-‘Ālam min Rabb al-‘Ālamīn wa-‘Ibādih al-Mursalīn*, 3/65.

Chapter 4

THE FIRST RATIONAL INDICATOR FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH: ARGUMENT FROM CREATION

This argument has multiple names in the religious space generally, and in the Islamic domain in particular. They all revolve around the central idea that whatever comes into existence after having been non-existent must have a cause that preferred its existence over its non-existence. They also comprise of the idea that whatever is possible is most definitely contingent on a non-contingent cause that created it.¹²² That cause is Allah ﷻ. Some of the names for this argument are: the argument from creation, the argument from invention, the prime mover argument, the kalam argument, universal causation, the argument from first cause, the causal argument, the argument from the universe, the cosmological argument, and others.

One who ponders over this proof will find it to be the simplest of all the indicators that are suggestive of Allah ﷻ. This explains why this argument is widespread across all civilisations, cultures, and nations. The motivation behind it is an instinctive question seeking the cause of observable and perceived temporal events. Though its scenarios and names are varied, its basis lies in two extremely clear propositions:

- First proposition: Temporal events exist. A temporal event is that which was preceded by its non-existence, or anything that has a beginning.
- Second proposition: Temporal events point to the existence of a cause.
- Conclusion: Temporal events in existence must have a cause, which is Allah ﷻ.

¹²² The argument from contingency was mentioned alongside the argument from temporality, as they have common themes and are mutually similar. Though they lead to the same outcome, they are actually two separate proofs.

Explaining the foundation of this argument in *al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah* (*Revealing the Methodologies of the Arguments*), Ibn Rushd (Averroes) the grandson¹²³ said,

As for the argument from invention, it captures the existence of fauna, flora, and the heavens. This method is based on two principles that are firmly present in the innate predispositions of all people. The first is that these existing entities are invented. This is something automatically known from fauna and flora, as He ﷻ said, "...those idols you invoke besides Allah can never create so much as a fly, even if they all were to come together for that."¹²⁴ We see inanimate bodies in which life is created. We definitely know that there is an entity that creates and favours them with life here, which is Allah ﷻ. As for the heavens, we know from their unfaltering movements that they have been commanded to look after what is here in the world, and that they have been subjugated for our benefit. Something that is subjugated is, by necessity, invented and commanded by something else. As for the second principle, it is that every invented thing has an inventor. Therefore, one can correctly deduce from these two propositions that something in existence¹²⁵ has a doer that originated it.¹²⁶

We can note the observation that Ibn Rushd makes. He differentiated between how fauna and flora are indicative of origination, versus how heavens are indicative of the same. For the former, he considered it self-evident; for the latter he considered the sign of their subjugation as the sign for their origination. Based on this, we can say the indicators of temporal events for Allah ﷻ are of two levels. This is based on how close or remote temporal events are from being capturable by the senses and observation, and the potential of them being observable and perceptible to the senses when emerging:

- The temporal emergence of individually observable creations.
- The temporal emergence of the world (the genus of temporal events).

When we contemplate the nature of how revelation dealt with this argument, we notice that the first level is more present. This is because it is perceptible by the senses, which is the quickest way to acquiring the aim without the need for lengthy propositions, expansive philosophical argumentation, or proving something that is not present or observable.

¹²³ Translator's note: As opposed to his grandfather, who was also known as Ibn Rushd.

¹²⁴ *Al-Hajj*, 73.

¹²⁵ It would have been more accurate to say, 'the invented existing entity', as is clear from the context.

¹²⁶ *Al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah*, p. 119.

Explaining the Qur’anic method here, and highlighting that observable temporal events are not in need for evidence to demonstrate their temporality, Ibn Taymiyyah states, ‘The method mentioned in the Qur’an is by reasoning for the temporality of man and other beings – whose temporality is known by observation and similar means – in order to demonstrate the existence of the Creator ﷻ. The Originator can be argued for by the origination of man. Man’s origination does not need to be reasoned by associating him with change, temporality, or the necessity of temporal events being terminal.

The difference between reasoning *through* his temporality and reasoning *for* his temporality is evident. What is in the Qur’an is the first, not the second. Allah ﷻ says, “Or were they created by nothing, or are they their own creators?”¹²⁷ Consequently, the mere temporal emergence of fauna, flora, metals, rain, clouds, and similar is known by necessity; it is in fact witnessed and does not need proof. Only that which is not necessarily known through the senses is to be learned via proof. The temporality of these beings is instinctive knowledge that does not require evidence. It is known either sensorily or instinctively, whether by way of being informed that can offer instinctive knowledge, or by other ways of necessary knowledge. The emergence of man from seminal fluid is like the emergence of fruits from trees and flora from the Earth, etc. It is sensorily known that this same fruit is emergent, coming into existence after having not occurred; the same applies to man and others. Allah ﷻ states, “Do such people not remember that We created them before, when they were nothing?”¹²⁸, and He ﷻ says, “An angel replied, ‘So will it be! Your Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me, just as I created you before, when you were nothing!’”^{129, 130}

One subtle point that Ibn Taymiyyah alluded to is the state of familiarity or the lack thereof vis-à-vis observing a particular event, and the impact this state has on a person becoming heedless of the indicators that are easily accessible to him. Ibn Taymiyyah ﷻ says,

‘This is why the *fiṭrah* of the creation is wired so that whenever they see a newly emerging event – such as thunder, lightning, and earthquakes – they remember and glorify Allah. This is because they know that this recurrence did not recur by itself, but rather there was an Originator who caused it to originate. Though they know the same

¹²⁷ *Al-Ṭūr*, 35.

¹²⁸ *Maryam*, 67.

¹²⁹ *Maryam*, 9.

¹³⁰ *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 7/219. See also *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, p. 51.

is applicable to all other newly emerging events, the events they are used to are already familiarised to them, as opposed to the rarely recurring ones. Otherwise, those who mostly remember and glorify Allah when newly emerging events that are rare appear would have already seen those oft-recurring signs of Allah that are far greater than the rare event. Had Allah done nothing other than create man, that alone would be the greatest of signs. Everyone knows that man was not created by himself, his parents, or anyone else from humankind. Everyone knows that he must have had an originator. Everyone knows he must have had a Creator that created him, and that He is present, alive, omniscient, omnipotent, all-hearing, and all-seeing. One who creates other living things is worthier of being alive; one who grants other things knowledge is worthier of knowledge; one who makes other things powerful is worthier of power. It is also known that the masterful design therein denotes the knowledge of the Doer, and that the special design denotes the will of the Doer. The process of origination per se could not have occurred without the originator's power. A person's knowledge of his own specific, personal, and individual self would offer him the knowledge of these godly meanings and other things, as Allah ﷻ states, "...as there are within yourselves. Can you not see?"^{131,132}

It should be noted that most Qur'anic passages that reveal the temporal nature of events were brought to demonstrate a wider point, not to merely prove the existence of the Creator, like the two verses Ibn Taymiyyah concluded his previous statement with. The context in these verses show that they were revealed to offer reasoning for the perfect power of Allah ﷻ, and that He is able to bring about the Resurrection. In other words, one who created things out of nothing is *a fortiori* able to refashion them. This amount, as mentioned before, implicitly yet self-evidently suggests that the Omnipotent exists, and that His existence is suggested by the mere emergence of the creation out of nothing. The most famous verse that carries this rational argument is Allah's statement: 'Or were they created by nothing, or are they their own creators?'¹³³

For the issue we are dealing with here, this awe-inspiring verse is the most enduring proof in the Qur'an. The verse starts off by setting out the great theological reality by focusing the discussion to what are the possibilities, after which it proceeds to demonstrate why all the options are impossible save for the only true option: Man has a Creator Who created him. The verse poses a question to rational people: 'Were they brought into existence without anyone causing it?

¹³¹ *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 21.

¹³² *Dar' Ta'ārūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/123.

¹³³ *Al-Tūr*, 35.

Or did they bring themselves into existence? It is neither, for it is Allah Who created them and gave them life, having previously been nothing worth mentioning.’¹³⁴

Detailing this argument, Ibn al-Qayyim says,

Contemplate the phrasal repetition of the creation term, and the restriction that comprises of establishing evidence in the simplest and most eloquent manner. Allah ﷻ is essentially saying, “How could have these creations – having not been in existence – been created without a Creator? This would be considered impossible by anyone with understanding and rationality, that there can be something made without a maker, or something created without a creator.” If a person passes by a wasteland without any building, then he passed by it again and saw solid buildings and castles, he would have no doubt that these had a maker. Then Allah said, “Or were they created by nothing, or are they their own creators?”¹³⁵ This, likewise, shows that it is impossible that a servant invents and creates himself. How can someone be able to create himself out of non-existence? He cannot even increase his own life, not even by an hour, even though he has all the facilities of life. He cannot even extend his finger, fingernail, or even one strand of his hair. Given that both options are false, the only option that remains is that they have a Creator Who created them, and a Fashioner Who fashioned them. He is the True Divine Who is worthy of their worship and thanks. How can they thank a god other than Him when He is the one and only being that created them? If it is said, “What is the place of Allah’s statement ‘Or did they create the heavens and the Earth? In fact, they have no firm belief in Allah’¹³⁶ in this evidence?”, it would be said in response: “The best place. Through the first couple of segments, He explained that they have a Creator and Fashioner, and that they are created. With the third segment, He explained that they are unable to create, having been created themselves and brought into existence. They did not create themselves. They did not create the heavens or the Earth. It was the One, the Omnipotent, the One described as ‘There is neither any god nor lord besides Him’ Who created them. He created the heavens and the Earth. By creating the upper and lower dominions and everything therein, He alone is the one Who created both residence and resident.”¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 7/437.

¹³⁵ *Al-Ṭūr*, 35.

¹³⁶ *Al-Ṭūr*, 36.

¹³⁷ *Al-Ṣawā‘iq al-Mursalāh*, 2/494.

Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im ؓ has a beautiful narration revealing the greatness of this Qur’anic verse. He said, ‘I heard the Prophet ﷺ read *al-Ṭūr* in the Maghrib prayer. When he reached this verse: “Or were they created by nothing, or are they their own creators?”¹³⁸, my heart almost flew out.’¹³⁹ The one contemplating the method of the Prophets in debating those who denied the lordship of Allah ﷻ and claimed it for themselves will note that the Prophets instructed them with this rational method to argue for the lordship of Allah ﷻ, and subsequently His worthiness to be worshipped alone.

The most infamous person who denied the lordship of Allah ﷻ was Pharaoh. He said, ‘I am your lord, the most high!’¹⁴⁰ As thus, part of the discussion Mūsā had with him was to use the effects of the power of Allah ﷻ as an evidence against him. Allah ﷻ says, ‘Pharaoh asked, “And what is ‘the Lord of all worlds’?”’¹⁴¹ Mūsā ؑ offered a variety of answers and proofs. He reminded Pharaoh of the innate instinct, that Allah is far more recognisable than the need for some definition. He explained that all of Allah’s creation is existentially dependent on Him – all the heavens, the Earth, and everything in between is in need of Allah ﷻ for creation, sustenance, and assistance. His statement ‘Lord of the east and west’¹⁴² is additional information and emphasis that all events are dependent on Him, ﷻ. Everything above and beneath you, everything in the east and the west, and everything in between that is in front of you and behind you is dependent on Him ﷻ.

Ibn Taymiyyah analysed the debate between Mūsā and Pharaoh:

Pharaoh shrouded his denial and rejection in the form of a rhetorical question. He was not asking about the attributes of a Lord he had already acknowledged, as he was in denial of Him and rejected Him. This is why towards the end of the discussion, he said, “If you take any other god besides me, I will certainly have you imprisoned.”¹⁴³ He also said, “...although I am sure he (Mūsā) is a liar.”¹⁴⁴ His question was actually to convey his denial and rejection. He was basically saying, “The world does not have a lord who sent you. Who is this?” – as a point of denial. Mūsā explained that He is known to both him and those who were present in court, and that His signs were apparent, clear, and undeniable. He stated that they were

¹³⁸ *Al-Ṭūr*, 35.

¹³⁹ Narrated by Bukhārī, hadith no. 4854.

¹⁴⁰ *Al-Nāzi‘āt*, 24.

¹⁴¹ *Al-Shu‘arā’*, 23.

¹⁴² *Al-Shu‘arā’*, 28.

¹⁴³ *Al-Shu‘arā’*, 29.

¹⁴⁴ *Ghāfir*, 37.

denying with their tongues what they instinctively knew to be true. As related in another place in the Qur'an, Mūsā said to Pharaoh, "You know well that none has sent these signs down except the Lord of the heavens and the Earth as insights."¹⁴⁵ Allah ﷻ said, "And, although their hearts were convinced the signs were true, they still denied them wrongfully and arrogantly. See then what was the end of the corruptors!"¹⁴⁶ Pharaoh did not say "Who (Arabic = *man*) is the Lord of the Worlds?", as *man* is a question about a specific being. It is used in questions in which an exact and specific entity is being questioned, with its generic identity already known. It is like when a conduit is asked when he comes from someone, "Who (*man*) sent you?" 'As for *mā*, that would be used in a question for description. Pharaoh was saying, "What is this? And what is this that you have called 'Lord of the Worlds'?" He said this out of denial and rejection of Him. When he asked this in a dismissive fashion, Mūsā answered that He is far more recognisable than to ever be denied, and that He is far more obvious than to be ever doubted. He said, "He is the Lord of the heavens and the Earth and everything in between, if only you had sure faith."¹⁴⁷ He did not say, "...if only you had sure faith *in such and such*" – he kept it open ended. In essence, if you had certainty for anything, the first on the list of certainties should be conviction in this Lord – just as when the Messengers said to their people, "Is there any doubt about Allah?"¹⁴⁸ If you say, "We have no certainty in anything. In fact, all knowledge has been seized from us", then this is a general claim to sophism. Its claimant is obviously lying, as knowledge is part and parcel of every human. Every rational human must have some knowledge. This is why it has been stated in the definition of rationality that it is the instinctive knowledge, which no rational person is free of. So when Pharaoh said, "Your messenger, who has been sent to you, must be insane"¹⁴⁹, it was a lie on the Messenger. They had left their praiseworthy traditions, and thus they ascribed the Messengers to insanity. They also showcased a denial or doubting in the Creator. This was the state of their common people and their religion. This was a good religion in their eyes, and the god they obeyed was Pharaoh: "Your messenger, who has been sent to you, must be insane."¹⁵⁰ So Mūsā explained to him that he is the one who has been left bereft of beneficial logic, and he

¹⁴⁵ *Al-Isrā'*, 102.

¹⁴⁶ *Naml*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Al-Shu'arā'*, 24.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibrāhīm*, 9-10.

¹⁴⁹ *Al-Shu'arā'*, 27.

¹⁵⁰ *Al-Shu'arā'*, 27.

is worthier of this ascription. He said, “He is the Lord of the east and west, and everything in between, if only you had any sense.”¹⁵¹ Logic requires instinctive and certain knowledge, the greatest of which in the *fiṭrah* is acknowledging the Creator. He then went on to explain that affirming Him is a logical implication. However, beneficial knowledge is praiseworthy when a person endowed with it acts upon it. If he does not act upon it, it would be said that he is bereft of logic. It would also be said that the one who does not follow what he is seemingly certain of actually does not possess certainty. Certainty can also mean knowledge that is settled in the heart; it can also mean acting upon this knowledge. Therefore, the term believer (one who is certain) would only be said for those in whose hearts both knowledge and action have settled. The people of Pharaoh did not follow when they knew. They therefore possessed neither logic nor certainty. The statement of Mūsā denotes both points: If you have certainty, you will know Him, and if you have logic, you will know Him. If you claim that you have no certainty or logic, then likewise your people. This therefore would be an acknowledgement on your part that your humanity has been taken away from you. Whoever is like this is unfit to claim divinity. Even though this is false on your part, you still believe Him. It is as Allah ﷻ said, “And, although their hearts were convinced the signs were true, they still denied them wrongfully and arrogantly.”¹⁵² You have logic by which you can recognise Him. However, your predilections prevent you from following what logic dictates. You want to boast in the land and be corrupt. Therefore, from this angle, you have no logic.’¹⁵³

There was a confrontation between Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Namrūd (Nimrod) similar to that of Mūsā ﷺ and Pharaoh. Allah ﷻ says, ‘Are you O Prophet not aware of the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord because Allah had granted him kingship? Remember when Abraham said, “My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death.” He argued, “I too have the power to give life and cause death.” Abraham challenged him, “Allah causes the Sun to rise from the east. So make it rise from the west.” And so the disbeliever was dumbstruck. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.’¹⁵⁴ Explaining the segments of this debate and the state of Namrūd, Ibn Kathīr ﷺ said,

That is because he denied that there is a god other than him, like Pharaoh said to his people, “O chiefs! I know of no other god for you

¹⁵¹ *Al-Shu‘arā*, 28.

¹⁵² *Al-Naml*, 14.

¹⁵³ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 16/334.

¹⁵⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

but myself.”¹⁵⁵ It was only his arrogance and prolonged rule that led him to his tyranny, gross disbelief, and severe obstinance. This is why Allah said, “...because Allah had granted him kingship?”¹⁵⁶ It is like he demanded evidence from Ibrāhīm for the existence of the Lord he was calling to. Ibrāhīm said, “My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death.”¹⁵⁷ By this he meant: “The evidence for His existence is the appearance of these observable things after they were previously in non-existence, and their non-existence after they had been in existence. This is automatically proof for the existence of the Doer and the Chooser, as they would not have occurred by themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for there to be an entity who brought them into existence. That would be the Lord to Whose worship that I call, for He is alone and without partner.” At that moment, the interlocutor – Namrūd – said, “I too have the power to give life and cause death.”¹⁵⁸ Qatādah, Muhammad ibn Ishāq, Suddī, and others said, “Look – I now have two people brought to me. They are on death row. I hereby order that one is killed and the other pardoned. This is the meaning of giving life and death.” It appears – and Allah knows best – that this is not what Namrūd meant, as this is not a direct answer to Ibrāhīm, nor is it related to his question, as it does not preclude the existence of a Maker. Rather, what he meant was to proclaim this station for himself out of stubbornness and arrogance. He pretended that by doing this, he was the one who issued life and death. Pharaoh followed him on this: “O chiefs! I know of no other god for you but myself.”¹⁵⁹ This is why when he claimed this puffery, Ibrāhīm told him, “Allah causes the Sun to rise from the east. So make it rise from the west.”¹⁶⁰ By this he meant: “If you are claiming that you give life and death, then the One Who does this is the One Who enforces His will in existence by creating His chosen entities, and by subjugating the planets and their movements. This Sun appears every day from the east – if you are a god who gives life and death as you claim, then bring it from the west.” When he knew he was unable and could not offer a response, he realised that he could no longer boast in this situation, and was left dumbstruck. Allah ﷻ said, “And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”¹⁶¹ This means He does not inspire them to any

¹⁵⁵ *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 38.

¹⁵⁶ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

¹⁵⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

¹⁵⁸ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

¹⁵⁹ *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 38.

¹⁶⁰ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

¹⁶¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 258.

evidence or proof. Rather, their evidence is futile in the eyes of their Lord. Upon them is wrath, and they will suffer a severe punishment. Revelation according to this meaning is far better than what most logicians mention, namely that Ibrāhīm’s switch from the first issue to the second was a switch from one evidence to another that was more clear-cut. Some logicians refer to this switch with an unsavoury expression. However, it is not like they have stated. Rather, the first issue is like the proposition to the second and highlights the falsehood of what Namrūd claimed in both the first and second issues. And to Allah belongs all praise and thanks.¹⁶²

Evidence for the proposition and the conclusion

- First proposition: Temporal events exist.
- Second proposition: Every temporal event has someone who caused it.
- Conclusion: Allah ﷻ is the cause of temporal events.

Evidence for these two propositions, and how they lead to the aforementioned conclusion, is required.

Proof for the first proposition: ‘Temporal events exist’

The proof of this proposition is the senses and observation, which is what Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, and others pointed out in relation to perceptible temporal events. On the temporality of the universe (and everything within it), both its existence and non-existence can be envisaged, and thus its existence is not considered necessary – it is only contingent. Contingent entities are most certainly temporal, as they require the existence of a non-contingent being for them to come into existence. The temporality of the universe will be discussed in more detail in the next section, by the permission of Allah.

The senses are cognitive transmitters, not cognitive arbiters. A man’s recognition of the emerging things he witnesses and senses around him is necessary. Ibn Taymiyyah ﷻ said,

The method of bringing evidence by using that whose temporality is observable is in the Qur’an, and the ancient scholars and Imams have agreed to it, though in conjunction with instinct and the senses. With this, there is no need to offer evidence for the temporality of specific

¹⁶² *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 1/686.

emerging things, but rather they are to be admitted into evidence for the existence of the Originator ﷻ.¹⁶³

Doubting the temporality of those things whose emergence can be observed leads to sophism, which shuts down the possibility of any knowledge. It results in the equalisation of a sane person and a madman.

Proof for the second proposition: ‘Every temporal event must have someone who caused it’

The proof for this is rational instinctiveness, as represented in the principle of causality. It is a self-evident and instinctive issue whose opposite scenario cannot be envisaged: It is not possible to imagine the existence of a temporal matter without knowing there was a cause that brought about its emergence. Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘Knowing that an originated entity must have an originator is innate and instinctive knowledge.’¹⁶⁴ Therefore, this is an issue that does not require a process of evidence-based reasoning. Rather, it would be accepted as fact, for it is basic knowledge, upon which theoretical knowledge is based.

Rational necessities are to be used as evidence for other things. They are not there to be proven. They acquire their decisiveness from their innateness. Without affirming their instinctiveness, the basis of knowledge would become an infinite series, causing the collapse of the possibility of gaining any knowledge. Therefore, there must be some basic facts – or cognitive concepts – upon which the process of evidence-based reasoning is founded. One of these instinctive cognitive concepts is the principle of causality.

It is interesting that the process of evidence-based reasoning requires that rational necessity is acknowledged. The connection between evidence and what it points to is governed by this rule, for evidence is the cause of gaining knowledge about what it points to. The opponent’s mere attempt to disprove the principle of causality is a tacit acknowledgement on his part in favour of it. On the deep influence of this principle on the make-up of human rationality, Ibn Taymiyyah said,

It is known by *fiṭrah* – upon which Allah predisposed his slaves with clear logic – that an emerging event does not occur without something originating it, and that the emergence of a temporal event without an originator can be automatically ruled out as false. This is entrenched in all children of Adam, even small children. If a child were struck and said, “Who hit me?”, and he was told, “Nobody”, his mind would not accept that the strike occurred without someone

¹⁶³ *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 7/223.

¹⁶⁴ *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-Man Baddal Dīn al-Masīḥ*, 3/202.

perpetrating it. This is why if someone posited that writing, construction, implantation, or similar can occur without someone doing these, rational people would consider him to be either a madman or a sophist, just like someone who denied self-evidence and instinctive knowledge.’¹⁶⁵

For further emphasis and clarity on this instinctive knowledge, it can be said that, prior to existence, anything that is now existent was: a) impossible, b) possible, or c) necessary. The first option is unviable as it would have never come into existence in the first place. The third option is also unviable as it would never have been non-existent. Therefore, the only credible option left is that it is *possible* – that it can accept both existence and non-existence. And because it left nothingness to come into existence, there must be an entity exercising preponderance in favour of its existence over its non-existence, without which it would have remained in the realm of nothingness. The entity exercising preponderance in favour of its existence is also known as the cause or reason for its existence.

Based on this, we say that there is nothing that comes into existence without a cause that preferred its existence over its non-existence. It is impossible that this cause is non-existent, as nothingness does not exist as an entity. It cannot be envisaged that nothingness caused it to be – anything that does not possess something cannot offer that same thing to something else. Likewise, it would be impossible for something to be its own cause. If something was non-existent, it cannot be a cause for something else to come into existence, let alone itself. If we assumed that something chose itself to be in existence, that would be evidence for it being a necessary entity, whose nothingness would be impossible. It is a contradiction and a self-evident impossibility that something that is possible is also necessary. It only remains to say that the cause of an entity’s emergence is something in existence that is external to that. That is the point.

Perhaps one may find some ambiguity in this rational self-evident fact. This is how instinctive knowledge is: When an attempt is made to uncover and clarify it, it just becomes complicated. As Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī said, ‘Forcing evidence for clear-cut matters increases their ambiguity and offers no clarity to them.’¹⁶⁶ This is because evidence should be clearer than what it points to, so it is unfeasible for theoretical knowledge to be evidence to reveal what are self-evident truths.

The purpose with the aforementioned paragraphs is not to offer evidence for the principle of causality. Rather, what we have done is to highlight the reality of this principle and set out its application. The principle is rational and self-evident. It is not in need of any evidence. In fact, the process of evidence-based reasoning

¹⁶⁵ *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-Man Baddal Dīn al-Masīḥ*, 3/202.

¹⁶⁶ *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I’tiqād*, p. 95.

is based on innately understood principles like it. Ghazālī said, ‘This principle must be acknowledged. It is basic and instinctive to the mind. For the one who deliberates about this, perhaps he is doing so because he did not understand the terms “temporal” or “cause”; once he does, his mind would automatically accept that every temporal entity has a cause.’¹⁶⁷ He went on to explain the two terms.

Based on the two propositions, it follows that there must be a pre-eternal, non-contingent existence that is the cause of all temporal events and possibilities. The evidence for this cause being non-contingent is this: Given we know every specific event has a cause, and the cause has a cause, we must stop the sequence of potentially infinite causes by assuming a primary cause that is not dependent on a cause. This is because causal infinity is impossible according to the philosophers, as it would mean no individual case of temporality would have ever taken place.

Irrespective of the complex net of temporal events, causes, and their interrelationship, what one must know is that those causes must go back to the original cause. Without this, the series of causes would not have existed to start with.

Here is an example. Imagine there is a man who was standing by the train tracks as the train carriages passed by him. This happened to be his first ever experience of seeing a train. He asked himself: ‘Why is this carriage moving forward?’ After a while, he realised that it was being pulled by the carriage in front of it, and likewise that one by the one in front of it, until the end. Now, if someone said, ‘What prevents the notion that every carriage has a carriage in front of it, pulling the one behind it, and that process goes on for infinity?’, the answer to that would simply be that no carriage would then move. For example, carriage E cannot move until carriage F moves; carriage F cannot move until carriage G moves; and so on. If we went on, no carriage would ever move. Therefore, the mind would instinctively know that there is a ‘first carriage’, which is causing all the carriages to move.

The atheist statement ‘The world is a large circle of life’ does not solve their problem here. They attempt to create a solution for this quagmire by making the universe an autarkic system. This means that the net of complex interrelationships between causes and events can answer the question of temporality without the need for an original cause. They add that every cause has a cause to infinity but it is like a closed chain, the end of which meets up to form a circle.

This does not answer anything. Even if you linked the first carriage to the last carriage and formed a loop, and someone suggested that the first carriage was being pulled by the last carriage, then this still does not explain the temporality of the movement itself – this movement must have had a first cause, upon which the

¹⁶⁷ *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, p. 92.

movement of all the carriages rests. Also, if the first scenario leads to infinite causes – which is impossible – then this solution leads to infinite regress, which too is impossible. Looking at the previous example would reveal the reason for its impossibility.

The second level of the argument from creation and invention: The cosmological argument

This proof is known as the argument from temporality, the kalam argument, the argument from the universe, or the cosmological argument. The propositions and conclusion of this proof are similar to those of the first level that we just dealt with:

- First proposition: Anything with a beginning must have a cause.
- Second proposition: The universe has a beginning.
- Conclusion: Therefore, the universe must have a cause.

The cause that preferred its existence over its non-existence is Allah ﷻ.

In actuality, this method of reasoning is not new in the philosophy or kalam space. In fact, it is the most famous entry point of kalam into the issue of the existence of Allah ﷻ. This is why even some of those who have used this reasoning within the contemporary Western arena – such as the famous Christian debater William Lane Craig – have called it the ‘kalam cosmological argument’; he also has a book with the same name. In the beginning of this book, he makes the following important acknowledgement: ‘Probably no chapter in the history of the cosmological argument is as significant – or as universally ignored – as that of the Arabic theologians and philosophers. Although we find in them the origin and development of two of the most important versions of the cosmological argument, namely the argument from temporal regress and the argument from contingency, the contribution of these Islamic thinkers is virtually ignored in western anthologies and books on the subject.’¹⁶⁸

What must be considered when discussing this class of indication – which is the argument from the creation to prove the Creator – is that it is in reality affirming the temporality of a specific creation, or a number of creations, with tools of reasoning that lead to the same conclusion offered by eyewitness observation. This is because the religious conceptualisation in general – and the Islamic one in particular – believes in the existence of other worlds beyond the specific world which we call our universe.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s famous polemic with the philosophers and the kalam scholars on the issue of the temporality versus the pre-eternality of the world, and

¹⁶⁸ *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, p. 3.

his position on infinite regress of events and the pre-eternality of their genus, complicates the question. In his view, there is no beginning or end to creation *as a whole*, though *every individual* created being would have a beginning. Therefore, in light of this viewpoint that Ibn Taymiyyah reasoned, there is not much benefit to be had in attempting to prove there was a beginning to creation *as a whole*, since this view claims there was no beginning. So long as Allah ﷻ is ascribed with complete power and will, and that He created whenever He likes, then every specific creation a mind can envisage to have a beginning can possibly have been preceded with another, precisely for the reason that Allah's power and will are perfect. When a person judges that the chain must be broken, that there must be a first creation, and that it is impossible for it to be preceded by another creation, the problem of impossibility being ascribed to the Lord ﷻ would come into play, and the impossibility of the deed would be applicable to Allah ﷻ. This is something He can never be described with, as He is pre-eternally and forever into the future described with creation, power, and will. The fact is this issue confuses the mind and is consigned to the deep end of philosophical debate. This is obviously not the place for that discussion.

I only wanted to point this out so we can situate this class of argument in its rightful place. It would therefore not be suitable to promote it with zeal. One should only engage with this argument to the extent of its beneficial impact: that it brings about a quick acknowledgement from all sides that the universe we are in is temporal, that anything in the purview of our senses is temporal, and that anything in this universe that is absent from us is also temporal.

The acknowledgement of most atheists today on the temporality of the universe, and that everything therein is temporal, is one that was typically not found in pre-modern atheism. It was only until recently that they used to believe the universe is pre-eternal; in fact, they had this down as an accepted fact, and stated that the burden of proof for its temporality was on those who claim it is temporal. Bertrand Russell, the famous British mathematician and philosopher, claimed that 'the universe is just there, and that is all' – it required no explanation according to him; it was pre-eternal without anything that caused it to begin.¹⁶⁹

Nowadays, the scope of debate in this issue is very limited. The prevailing view across modern science is that the world is temporal, and that the universe we are living in has a fixed age. The physicist Stephen Hawking said, 'Instead, almost

¹⁶⁹ In the same passage, he mentioned another possibility: Even assuming the universe has a beginning, it could have appeared without cause. This problem shall be discussed later. See his famous book *Why I Am Not a Christian*, which is published as part of *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 568. Also refer to his debate with Frederick Copleston, broadcast by the *BBC Radio* in 1948, a transcript of which can be found here: http://www.scandalon.co.uk/philosophy/cosmological_radio.htm. It concluded with Russell becoming convinced that the entire topic of the cause of the world's temporality – if it is indeed temporal – is fruitless.

everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the big bang.’¹⁷⁰ The agnostic cosmologist Alexander Vilenkin said, ‘Did the universe have a beginning? At this point, it seems that the answer to this question is probably yes.’¹⁷¹

Thus, the universe’s ‘pre-eternality versus temporality’ is no longer a point of contention in science. There is general agreement on the latter. However, the contention remains over the cause of its emergence. This sort of scientific acknowledgement substantially reduces the philosophical debate surrounding the issue of pre-eternality versus temporality. This has been quite a heated debate within historical philosophy and kalam discussions. In fact, it is the most hotly contested area in the spaces of philosophy and kalam. Suffice it to say that Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī dedicated around two thirds of his book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* to deal with the matter. He offered kalam-based proofs against those philosophers who opined that the universe is pre-eternal. The same issue also took a fair bit of space in Ibn Rushd’s book *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, which is a refutation of Ghazālī. In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah has lengthy discussions on this in various works, including *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, *al-Ṣafadiyyah*, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, *Mas’alah Ḥudūth al-‘Ālam*, *Sharḥ Ḥadīth ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, et alia*. No voluminous book on kalam exists that did not touch upon this.

My aim is not to encompass all the dimensions of this philosophical-kalam debate, as that would require a dedicated piece of research. It deals with the kalam proofs that demonstrate the temporality of the universe, which are many. Most are not free of problems; in fact, to ensure their consistency, the kalam scholars went on to adopt their erroneous implications. Forcing that discussion here, with all the problems and doubts it brings, at a time when the opposite side now acknowledges its temporality, is futile and should be avoided. Obviously, the point is not to confer any legitimacy to the pre-eternality view, or that this is a valid contention. There is no doubt that the world is temporal. Rather, the difference is in the tools by which this temporality is to be established. There is also no difference that this proof leads to the required outcome: the existence of the Creator.

We come back to the details of this proof. As mentioned before, the proof of the proposition ‘Anything with a beginning must have a cause’ is rational instinctiveness. We can clarify further with a detailed citation from Ibn Ḥazm رحمته الله, who revealed why this is instinctive and self-evident:

With all we have mentioned, it is established that the world has a beginning. Given that it does, it follows that it must be because of one of three reasons – there is no other:

¹⁷⁰ From a co-lecture with Roger Penrose titled *The Nature of Space and Time*.

¹⁷¹ *Answering Atheism*, p. 132.

1. Its own essence caused its emergence.
2. It emerged by itself without itself or anything else causing it.
3. It emerged as a result of something else.

If it caused its own emergence, it must be because of one of four reasons – there is no other:

1. Its own essence caused its own emergence when it was non-existent but its essence was existent.
2. Its own essence caused its own emergence when it was existent but its essence was non-existent.
3. Its own essence caused its own emergence when both of them were existent.
4. Its own essence caused its own emergence when both of them were non-existent.

All of these four options are impossible, as an entity and its essence are the same thing. All four imply that an entity is different from its essence; observation and the senses attest to its impossibility and falsehood. Therefore, this option is eliminated. It is also impossible that anything that comes out from non-existence into existence does so without either itself or something else causing it. This is because no state is worthier of preponderance than another when it comes to its emergence, as there is no state here to begin with. Therefore, there is no pathway for it to emerge through this option, yet we can see that its emergence is observable and possible. The state of emergence is different from the state of non-emergence. The state of emergence is the reason why it exists... Whatever applies to the option that the world caused its own emergence, or that something else caused its emergence, or that it emerged without cause, would be applicable to this state. If the statement goes on (i.e., the cause had a cause, and that cause had a cause...), it will mean infinity. Infinite regress in causes for the world's beginning is false and impossible, based on what we previously mentioned. Therefore, it has been falsified that the world either caused its own emergence or that it emerged without anything else causing it. As thus, since no other option remains, the third option is automatically established and must be deemed to be correct: The world was caused to emerge from non-existence to existence by something else. And with Allah lies all success.¹⁷²

As for the 'The universe has a beginning' proposition, it can be proved with a set of contemporary scientific concepts. These include the following.

¹⁷² *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*, 1/66.

First concept: Expansion of the universe

During the early stages of the history of cosmology, there was an agreement of sorts on two fundamental notions related to the nature of the universe:

1. The universe is homogeneous with the same characteristics – it is the same across all its constituent parts.
2. The universe is in a fixed and constant pattern.

When Einstein came and introduced relativity, these two assumptions appeared to contradict the first iteration of the law of relativity that he theorised. To deal with this problem, he proposed a constant coefficient he called the cosmological constant in order to counterbalance the effect of gravity. That way, there would be balance in the new theory of the universe that he had proposed, which was that the universe is static. This was the generally accepted view on the universe in most scientific circles back then: The universe was characterised as being static and constant.

Thereafter, the Belgian Catholic priest and physicist Georges Lemaître and the Russian scientist Alexander Friedmann came onto the scene. They offered a new theory for the universe: The universe is expanding, and it began from an extremely dense and compact state. Key support for the expansionist theory of the universe came from Edwin Hubble. In 1929, he made an important discovery: The galaxies around us are moving farther out from us with a speed that corresponds to the distance between them and us; their speed increases as the distance widens. Expansionism was detected through the light spectrum of those galaxies – they appear to be reddish, which suggests that they are moving farther away, as opposed to when something is moving closer, in which case it appears to the observer to have a blue haze.

In 1946, George Gamow theorised that, alongside the expansion of the universe and the falling of temperature, photons successfully detached from matter. This was represented in the form of a light ray that Gamow assumed existed, and that it continued to beam across the universe. This was accidentally discovered by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson. This phenomenon was later named as cosmic microwave background radiation, representing one of the strongest proofs for the Big Bang theory. This radiation uncovered the existence of abnormally high levels of temperature in between the galaxies, and that space does not have a temperature of absolute zero. Rather, space temperature sits at around 3 Kelvin – this radiation is the heat remnant of the Big Bang.

As a result of this discovery, the two researchers won the Nobel Peace Prize in Physics in 1978. This point marked a shift in the science community: Rejection of the Big Bang turned to general acceptance. It is interesting to note that this discovery on their part was an accident. They said, ‘Either we’ve seen the birth of the universe, or (as one astrophysical folk tale would have it) we’ve seen a pile of

pigeons!’¹⁷³ In summary, this theory states that the universe that we are in started from a single, hot, and infinitely dense mass of matter. It then started to expand for around 13.8 billion years. This expansion was not because of galaxies in the universe moving apart from one another like some might initially understand; rather, what is expanding is space itself, in which these celestial bodies live.

The example of this is like writing dots on a balloon, and then blowing it up. You would note that the dots move away from one another as the balloon expands, without the dots ever moving from their place – the only thing that expanded was the balloon. What is important is that this theory states that matter and energy – in fact, time and space¹⁷⁴ – were all made at the very moment of the Big Bang.

Alongside the many proofs supporting this theory, it has solved many of the universe’s mysteries that previously fraught scientists, like the abundance of helium in the universe. That problem arose because stars – which are the factories of producing the elements – are unable to produce such huge quantities of helium. This theory offered an explanation: The high density and temperature in the first three minutes of the universe was ideal to create helium from hydrogen, and as a result, a large amount of helium that now exists in the universe was made back then. Observation devices reveal that the stars and the galaxies comprise of 75% hydrogen and 24% helium, which agrees to a large extent with the Big Bang theory.

It also solved the Olbers’ paradox. Olbers was a German astronomer. The paradox relates to a daily phenomenon, or in more precise terms, a nightly phenomenon. We all can see it and may not even give it a second thought. It is the darkness of the night. Why is the night like this? A person may answer that it is because sunlight has disappeared. However, this answer is not satisfactory when we take into consideration that the Sun is not the only star in this universe. So that the paradox becomes clearer, let us assume that the universe is expanding indefinitely, and that it is pre-eternal as well. It would then have an infinite number of stars, such that if we were to draw a straight line from Earth in any direction, it would eventually hit a star. Also, the universe is pre-eternal, and so the light of those stars would also reach us. Given that this is the case, we should be able to perceive that the sky above us is illuminated with perpetual light during both night and day. However, that is not the case. Why?

The Big Bang theory provides us with an explanation for this. It states that even though it is expanding, the universe is limited in terms of space and time. Because of this, the stars are also limited. If we were to walk from Earth in a straight line until we reach the edge of the universe, it is possible that we might

¹⁷³ *Serendipity: Accidental Discoveries in Science*, p. 159.

¹⁷⁴ This issue requires research that would explain the nature of time and space, and offer a distinction between how these terms are understood in circles of philosophy as opposed to the circles of physics.

not come into contact with any star before reaching the edge. Moreover, in light of this theory, the universe has an age; as thus, the light coming from the stars require some considerable time before it reaches us. The stars we can see are an extremely tiny amount compared to the stars that exist in the universe. What prevents us from seeing the rest of the stars is that their light is still traversing the universe and has not yet reached us. This is why night is dark.

The ability to explain various phenomena is where the strength of the Big Bang theory lies. This also explains why this theory is so widely accepted. The point is not to detail this theory here, but rather to construct the notion that the universe indeed had a beginning. It is like how Terrance McKenna put it: ‘Modern science is based on the principle: “Give us one free miracle and we’ll explain the rest.” The one free miracle is the appearance of all the mass and energy in the universe and all the laws that govern it in a single instant from nothing.’¹⁷⁵

Second concept: The second law of thermodynamics

In the mid-90s, scientists attempted to uncover a rule that explains all irreversible processes in the universe. As a result of those efforts, the second law of thermodynamics was discovered. The first step to realising this was to note that heat always transfers from a more heated body to a less heated one, and heat keeps on transferring until all connected bodies reach thermal equilibrium.

The fact of the matter is that the thermal transfer is just one example of many, which can be described as the equilibrium concept or the balance of nature. The same can be seen vis-à-vis the spread of gases to achieve equilibrium, electricity, and other cases as well. Had these phenomena not occurred in nature, life would have been impossible. By this phenomenon, the air – for example – does not separate out so that oxygen gathers only on one side of the room and nitrogen on the other side.

One significant development in the shaping of this law is its connection with the concept of entropy. It is a technical term used to denote the amount of chaos. Anytime there is an increase in the scale of disorder within a system, the sum of the entropies rises therein; likewise, when there is a disorder scale decrease, the sum of the entropies decreases. This is why the law of thermodynamics has within it a provision that states that systems are inclined to switch from low entropy to higher entropy. In other words, they switch from order to disorder.

What concerns us here is the connection of this law to the universe. The universe is a closed system. This is why the second law of thermodynamics is applicable to it. As a closed system, the universe strives to achieve equilibrium in

¹⁷⁵ *The Science Delusion*, p. 65.

multiple fields. Heat spreads until it reaches equilibrium, and likewise the same occurs in the distribution of energy, entropy, and others as well.

As such, had the universe been pre-eternal, it would have already reached equilibrium, as it would have had an infinite amount of time to have reached this state. And had it reached this state, heat would have been equally distributed across all bodies inside the universe, the systems as we see them today would not have existed, disorder would have been equal across all its corners, the fountain of energy would have been depleted, and all movement would have stopped. In fact, every natural and chemical process would have stopped. Yet, the state of the universe is the exact opposite. The universe still has a system to it. It has not yet reached the stage of heat death. In light of what has preceded, the universe reveals to us an important fact: It is not pre-eternal, but rather has a fixed age when we look back into its history, and it had a start to it.

Based on these two propositions, we can say there is an external cause for the universe that is above its matter and beyond its nature. This external cause brought the world out into existence. That cause is Allah ﷻ Himself.

The most famous objections to the argument from creation

One who denies the existence of Allah ﷻ would not accept the instinctive indication of this argument, and would instead cast a set of doubts on it. These doubts either go back to the argument's first proposition, second proposition, or conclusion. Here, I shall mention the most important doubts and objections that have been listed.

Objections to the first proposition: 'Everything that has a beginning must have a cause'

The main way of casting doubt to this proposition is through the claim that something can come into existence without any cause, and that it is possible for a contingent entity to be chosen for existence – versus non-existence – without a chooser. Based on this, it is possible that the universe just came into existence without cause; therefore, it is not in need for a cause that preferred it to exist. As thus, this claim would make the need for an independent creator irrelevant.

The most famous sceptic argument strives to negate man's instinctive element. That instinct denotes the principle of causality. It has been previously highlighted that this principle is an instinctive and self-evident rational concept that does not require external veracity. The most famous sceptic of this principle is the English philosopher David Hume. He is a pioneer of the empiricist school, that declares that *only the senses* can be the source for human knowledge. He states,

To be fully acquainted, therefore, with the idea of power or necessary connexion, let us examine its impression; and in order to find the impression with greater certainty, let us search for it in all the sources, from which it may possibly be derived. When we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard-ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to the outward senses. The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression from this succession of objects: consequently, there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, anything which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion.¹⁷⁶

He also said,

The generality of mankind never find any difficulty in accounting for the more common and familiar operations of nature – such as the descent of heavy bodies, the growth of plants, the generation of animals, or the nourishment of bodies by food: but suppose that, in all these cases, they perceive the very force or energy of the cause, by which it is connected with its effect, and is for ever infallible in its operation. They acquire, by long habit, such a turn of mind, that, upon the appearance of the cause, they immediately expect with assurance its usual attendant, and hardly conceive it possible that any other event could result from it.¹⁷⁷

Hume constructed a philosophical argument that highlights his vision on the principle of causality and the nature of the relationship between cause and effect. He wrote this in his book *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The summary of his scepticism thesis is as follows:

We find that all distinct ideas are mutually separate. This includes the notions of cause and effect. They are both different concepts, and therefore separate. This is why it is easy for us to envisage in our minds an effect without envisaging its cause. Therefore, it is possible that we think of something coming into existence without simultaneously thinking of its cause, because the distinction between cause and effect is possible in our thoughts and minds. Given that this is the case, it should also be possible that there is no link between

¹⁷⁶ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 95.

¹⁷⁷ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 102.

cause and effect in the real world, as there is no inherent impossibility or contradiction that prevents this. Therefore, possibility dictates that effect can exist without cause, and thus the claim that every effect must have a cause collapses, and the principle of causation become unacceptable.¹⁷⁸

This, in short, is the scepticism thesis vis-à-vis universal causality as proposed by David Hume. The central problem with his thesis is obvious: He analogised the thoughts of a human mind to real-world possibilities. What may occur in the mind is way broader than what can actually occur in the real world. Therefore, not everything the mind can conjure up must have external presence. His conflation between *conceptual possibility* and *external possibility* is what led many philosophers to fall into numerous philosophical problems, such as Plato's theory of Forms, which gave rise to monism in various groups. There are other problems as well.

One humorous example to expose Hume's error was used by the philosopher Bruce Reichenbach. Dispelling the notion that something in the mind can also exist in the real world, he said to imagine an evenly thick plate. It is concave on one side and therefore convex on the other. Though both are from its distinct features, they cannot exist apart from each other. In fact, both are the result of the other, as the concaveness of one side results in the convexness of the other and vice versa.¹⁷⁹ It therefore seems that the negation of the link between conceptual reality and actual reality on Hume's part is incoherent.

Hume became entrapped into this quagmire thanks to his ascription to the empiricist school of thought. This school restricts the acquisition of knowledge to the senses. There is no doubt that such a gross restriction to the sources of knowledge cannot ever assist in the establishment of a philosophical rule upon which the notion of 'universal causality = every event has a cause behind it' or 'relative causality = a specific event has a specific cause' can be based. Proving this type of data requires *a priori* knowledge so that it can be deemed to be consistently applicable. Without this, the most that can be said in this context is that knowledge can be gained through sensory induction. This is what Hume stated, as he rejected *a priori* knowledge.¹⁸⁰

Yet there is a problem: The claim that full induction is achievable cannot be made; therefore, it is possible to be sceptical of the absolute applicability of causality. As our notion of the principle 'Every temporal event must have a cause' is based on observation alone, it would be possible for a person to claim the existence of a 'causeless temporal event', because the full induction that would

¹⁷⁸ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁹ *The Cosmological Argument*, p. 58.

¹⁸⁰ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 24.

have otherwise precluded this possibility has not been achieved. This is why there is no pathway to achieve this knowledge and establish its universal application without *a priori* knowledge imprinted onto the soul, well before sensory perception was ever possible. The principle of causality as an innate and instinctive concept has been repeatedly emphasised. Of course, the problem grows out of proportion when Hume rejects the process of induction altogether. He does so on this basis: Whatever we witness is simply one event following another, without us ever knowing the strength of causality the first event (cause) has in the second (effect). Based on this, we cannot say that the former is the cause for the latter, as he would claim.

I am not overly zealous of delving into the philosophical dimensions of this contentious issue, or assessing Hume's scepticism on universal causality for that matter. I argue that we have an innate and instinctive predisposition, and doubting it leads to sophism, which cannot be combated with just rational tools, proofs, or reasoning. In fact, the very process of reasoning and offering evidence is governed by the principle of causality. The price of denying this is very high indeed, as it leads to the negation of the possibility of gaining any knowledge. Ibn Rushd says, 'To deny the existence of efficient causes which are observed in sensory things is sophistry; he who defends this doctrine either denies with his tongue what is present in his mind, or is carried away by being overcome by a sophist doubt concerning this question.'¹⁸¹

He goes on to say,

Now intelligence is nothing but the perception of things with their causes, and in this it distinguishes itself from all the other faculties of apprehension. He who denies causes must deny the intellect. Logic implies the existence of causes and effects, and knowledge of these effects can only be rendered perfect through knowledge of their causes. Denial of cause implies the denial of knowledge; denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known, and that what is supposed to be known is nothing but opinion, that neither proof nor definition exist, and that the essential attributes which compose definitions are void. The man who denies the necessity of any item of knowledge must admit that even this – his own affirmation – is not necessary knowledge.¹⁸²

In fact, we can say that the price of this denial is even more steep and dangerous. If one can start having doubts on causality – which is innate and instinctive – one can then start being sceptical of other rational and instinctive concepts, such as the law of identity, the law of noncontradiction, the law of

¹⁸¹ *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 505.

¹⁸² *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, p. 507.

excluded middle, *et alia*. If the human mind instinctively believes in these, yet they too are subject to scepticism, what guarantee can there be that other innate concepts would be safe from being challenged and doubted? If we start to doubt other rational concepts, the door to gaining any knowledge would be indefinitely shut upon us, for theoretical knowledge can only be acquired by referring it back to knowledge that is predicated on the innate and instinctive concepts. Without these, we would not be able to acquire any knowledge.

What is strange is that most New Atheists follow through with these implications, though without ever really tasking themselves of taking ownership of the impact they have. In their studies and works, they are preoccupied with searching for the laws and patterns of this universe, even though they explicitly reject the rational concepts, and even the law of causality. It is a gross contradiction between theoretical conceptualisation and the real world. This contradiction is produced because it is impossible to maintain a state of rejection while exercising this sort of denial in real life – whether at a personal level, in relation to a person’s relationship with others or the universe, because one is keen to study, or other reasons. Denying the principle of causality is just a moot point dragged into these sorts of discussions without it ever having any actual credible influence on man’s daily actions, ideas, or thoughts beyond this limited polemical space. In fact, the scepticism of Hume here is itself a place of philosophical contention. Some attribute that position to him and claim he denied the principle of causality; others are doubtful as to whether this was ever his view – they see a man who wanted to link the events of the world to actual natural causes.

Regardless, after he had investigated the issue of interrelationships between things, Hume wrote a letter to John Stuart in 1754, in which he said, ‘But allow me to tell you that I never asserted so absurd a Proposition as *that anything might arise without a cause*: I only maintain’d, that our Certainty of the Falshood (sic) of that Proposition proceeded neither from Intuition nor Demonstration, but from another Source.’¹⁸³

Objections to the second proposition: ‘The universe has a beginning’

The most significant objection here is the attempt to offer alternative viewpoints that would replace the traditional theory of the Big Bang. The objection firstly entails – and maintains – the notion that the universe is pre-eternal, like the static model, or that it assigns an evolutionary angle to the Big Bang in the sense that it was the beginning *relative to our universe*, but not *the absolute beginning*.

It would appear that the attempt to propose such alternative theories is ideologically driven by the rejection of the theoretical implications of the Big Bang. We have one physicist express deep resentment of this theory, as if it were

¹⁸³ *The Letters of David Hume*, 1/187.

a religiously driven conspiracy. He said, ‘The underlying motive is, of course, to bring in God as creator. It seems like the opportunity Christian theology has been waiting for ever since science began to depose religion from the minds of rational men in the seventeenth century.’¹⁸⁴ The idea of the Big Bang made Einstein initially uncomfortable, as its implication was that the universe – as we see it today – has a beginning. He said, ‘This circumstance (i.e., of an expanding universe) irritates me.’

Robert Jastrow notes:

Einstein never liked the idea of a big bang because it suggested a beginning and a creation, and a creation suggested a Creator.’ He quoted Eddington by saying, ‘As a scientist I simply do not believe that the present order of things started off with a bang.’ Jastrow adds: ‘Oh yes, the metaphor there was that we know now that the universe had a beginning, and that all things that exist in this universe – life, planets, stars – can be traced back to that beginning, and it’s a curiously theological result to come out of science. The image that I had in my mind as I wrote about this was a group of scientists and astronomers who are climbing up a range of mountain peaks and they come to the highest peak and the very top, and there they meet a band of theologians who have been sitting for centuries waiting for them.’¹⁸⁵

The irony here is that it was the famous astronomer, Fred Hoyle, who coined the term ‘Big Bang’ for this theory, which he mockingly said in one of his discussions on the *BBC*. As a result, the theory became known by this term.

What is interesting is that in 1993, the *Sky & Telescope* magazine had a competition for a more suitable name for the Big Bang. Readers from 41 countries poured in with their suggestions, reaching a total of 13,099 recommendations, including ‘Matter Morphosis’, ‘The Bottom Turtle’, ‘Super Seed’, ‘Hubble Bubble’, ‘Bertha D. Universe’, ‘Doink’, ‘Let There Be Stuff’, and ‘Hey Looky There at That!’ The judges were Carl Sagan, Hugh Downs, and Timothy Ferris. In the end, the winner was announced to be – surprise surprise – Fred Hoyle! It seems that the name he mockingly assigned was the most appropriate.

The point here is that Hoyle was extremely critical of this theory. He considered it to be pseudoscience. Alongside Thomas Gold and Hermann Bondi, Hoyle proposed an alternative theory that admitted to the mutual distancing of the galaxies, but without ever acknowledging that the universe had an absolute

¹⁸⁴ *The Science Delusion*, p. 65.

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.daystar.com.org/interview/03interview.htm>

See *God and the Astronomers* by Robert Jastrow for more citations. Jastrow was an astrophysicist and an agnostic. He was the first chairman of NASA’s Lunar Exploration Committee.

beginning. His theory is called the steady state theory. He remained true to his position since he proposed it in 1948 right until his death in 2001. The Nobel laureate and physicist Steven Weinberg remarked on this theory by saying, ‘The steady state theory is philosophically the most attractive theory because it *least* resembles the account given in Genesis.’¹⁸⁶

One who closely looks at Hoyle’s model would see that he does not really offer any evidence for his view, but it is rather explaining away the evidence of the Big Bang and offering an alternative explanation for the phenomena represented in that evidence. It is as if his theory did not come from reading the universe empirically, but rather simply as a contrarian theory. One only has to listen to him speaking of his deep-seated resentment of the Big Bang theory for its philosophical and religious undertones: ‘To many people this thought process seems highly satisfactory because a “something” outside physics can then be introduced at $t = 0$. By a semantic manoeuvre, the word “something” is then replaced by “god”, except that the first letter becomes a capital, God, in order to warn us that we must not carry the enquiry any further.’¹⁸⁷

Indeed, his view did not gain acceptance across the wider scientific community, especially in light of the increasing number of discoveries, all of which support the Big Bang. The most important discovery has been the discovery of the cosmic microwave background, regarding which Stephen Hawking said, ‘But the final nail in the coffin of the Steady State theory came with the discovery of the microwave background radiation, in 1965. This radiation is the same in all directions. It has the spectrum of radiation in thermal equilibrium at a temperature of 2 point 7 degrees above the Absolute Zero of temperature. There doesn’t seem any way to explain this radiation in the Steady State theory.’¹⁸⁸

In addition, Hoyle’s theory has proven itself incapable of offering any credible scientific prediction or plausible explanations for the various phenomena that exist across the universe, such as the abundance of helium, which aligns itself perfectly with the Big Bang theory. Furthermore, the first iteration of Hoyle’s theory predicted that new galaxies would appear within the gaps between the known galaxies, and therefore, the new galaxies would be spread out across the universe. Yet, the Big Bang theory states that younger galaxies were formed at an earlier time in the history of the universe, and therefore, they have been in existence for a few billion years.

In the early 90s, Martin Ryle gathered evidence supporting the Big Bang theory. On the back of this, Barbara Gamow wrote a poem mocking Hoyle:

¹⁸⁶ *The World Within the World*, p. 226.

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/scholarly-writings/the-existence-of-god/the-ultimate-question-of-origins-god-and-the-beginning-of-the-universe>

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.hawking.org.uk/in-words/lectures/the-beginning-of-time>

*“Your years of toil”,
 Said Ryle to Hoyle,
 “Are wasted years, believe me.
 The steady state
 Is out of date
 Unless my eyes deceive me,
 My telescope
 Has dashed your hope;
 Your tenants are refuted
 Let me be terse
 Our Universe
 Grows daily more diluted!”
 Said Hoyle, “You quote
 Lemaître, I note,
 And Gamow. Well forget them!
 That errant gang
 And their Big Bang –
 Why aid them and abet them?
 You see, my friend,
 It has no end
 And there was no beginning,
 As Bondi, Gold
 And I will hold
 Until our hair is thinning!”¹⁸⁹*

The overwhelming majority of cosmologists believe in the Big Bang, that the universe that we are in had a point when it was born, and that the static universe theory has been completely abandoned. The above discussion is in relation to the model that seeks to dispel the notion that there was a beginning from the theory of everything (TOE). As for the model that seeks to maintain the pre-eternality of the universe while also acknowledging the Big Bang as the beginning of *our*

¹⁸⁹ *The Science Delusion*, p. 66.

universe (i.e., not the entirety of existence), they include: the oscillating universe model and the eternal inflation model.

The oscillating universe model

The oscillating universe model is based on the idea that the universe expands for a period, then collapses and contracts, and then expands again. The process repeats itself, resembling a ‘crunch and bounce’. This view states that the universe at its core is pre-eternal without any definitive beginning, but it is in a constant state of volatility of expansion and contraction.

This model has a number of problems. In addition, it carries the pervading yet unsubstantiated mentality of the pre-eternality of the universe. One can detect this in what John Gribbin said:

The biggest problem with the Big Bang theory of the origin of the Universe is philosophical – perhaps even theological – what was there before the bang? This problem alone was sufficient to give a great initial impetus to the Steady State theory; but with that theory now sadly in conflict with the observations, the best way round this initial difficulty is provided by a model in which the universe expands from a singularity, collapses back again, and repeats the cycle indefinitely.¹⁹⁰

One objection to the oscillating universe theory is that the notion of contraction is an area of great debate in the scientific community. Alan Guth and Marc Sher wrote a scientific paper titled ‘The Impossibility of a Bouncing Universe’, in which they mentioned that even if it is assumed that the universes contracts, it would be unable to repeat another bang.

Many cosmologists believe that the universe will continue to expand indefinitely and that the universe’s mass is not sufficient to cause a ‘Big Crunch’, as it requires a gravitational force that is capable of countering the force of expansion. Scientists estimated that the universe’s expansion was slowing down as a result of gravity, but it turned out – thanks to two teams of scientists who went on to win the Nobel Prize – that it is in fact completely the opposite: The universe is expanding at an ever-increasing rate of speed as a result of a centrifugal force – known as dark matter – that is greater than gravity. It has a power that is the opposite to gravity and pushes the universe to expand further and further out. This centrifugal power represents the cosmological constant, the extremely precise value which left scientists stunned. The value is so fine balanced that even the change of a fraction of 10^{120} would be cataclysmic for the universe. Had it been even a fraction more, the universe would expand quicker so to not allow

¹⁹⁰ *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, p. 122.

stars and galaxies to form; were it a fraction less, the universe would have rapidly collapsed on itself, soon after the Big Bang.

This poses a profound question: What exactly determined this constant of physics in this extremely precise and finely balanced manner, so that the universe and life could form? We shall discuss this in the section on the second rational indicator, Allah willing. The point here is that this centrifugal force, which many astrophysicists and cosmologists have detected, alludes to the fact that the universe will continue to expand indefinitely. For example, the atheist physicist Victor Stenger said, ‘Now, it should be noted that most cosmologists currently do not expect that the big crunch will happen. The best guess based on current observation and theory is that the universe is open; that is, it will expand forever.’¹⁹¹

Even some scientists who are of the ‘crunch and bounce’ view cannot find any evidence from physics to prove another Big Bang would occur. Some who believe that there would be a series of large bangs state that the process would be limited by a specific number of explosions, not that this process continues into both directions of time – into pre-eternality and into the future. Other physicists are of the view that a series of bangs can continue indefinitely, but they also believe that they started at a specific point in time (i.e., it is not pre-eternal). In reasoning this:

- Some say that though the universe will go through a series of big bangs, some of its mechanical energy will deplete at each explosion, and the power within the universe will slowly diminish this way. This is because this mechanical energy has no storage that allows the universe to expand like it would have in the previous round. It would be like a ball bouncing – it will continue to bounce, but each bounce would not be as strong as the previous one, until it rests on the ground. This theory was explained by the astronomer Hugh Ross in his book *The Creator and the Cosmos*.¹⁹²
- I have found some physicists adopt the view that the universe, unlike the previous theory, can be volatile. They do not believe that the universe loses energy, but rather it grows larger at each Big Bang due to increased entropy, as disorder would have increased with each expansion and contraction. This disorder would be a burden of energy that would need to be released at the next Big Bang, thus leading to an even greater expansion than the previous one. This means we can go back in this series of Big Bangs and find that each subsequent explosion was larger than

¹⁹¹ *God and the Folly of Faith*, p. 205.

¹⁹² *The Creator and the Cosmos*, p. 61.

the previous. In other words, if we go back in time, there would inevitably be a time when the universe started at a definite moment in time. This theory was proposed by the physicist Richard Tolman.¹⁹³

- Even the minority of scientists that believes it is possible to have a model of the universe that is indefinitely volatile are of the view that it is necessary to account for the quantities of energy and matter in a very precise manner. This view does not align well with atheism, as we shall discuss in the next rational proof. If this precision is a result of an external will, such a model would be impossible, as it would be self-contradictory. This is because the universe cannot simultaneously be pre-eternal and have a beginning when it was carefully balanced as per the desired requirement. However, if it is assumed that the universe was balanced without an external will pushing for this, it would automatically mean that this happened as a result of coincidence, which we will tackle in the next chapter.

The eternal inflation model

This model is an evolved version of the Big Bang theory. It affirms that our universe has an origin, but it adds that this does not mean that this is the absolute beginning of all matter and energy. This view states that matter and energy are pre-eternal. To clarify, this theory proposes that the constituent parts of the universe expand and contract at varying rates. It is possible to treat these parts as various universes, or the multiverse. Though it could be the case that our universe has an origin point, this does not mean that all universes are like this.

Scientists have noted that this theory has also been beset by a number of problems. This is why the cosmologist Andrei Linde attempted to solve the problem facing this model by offering a refined version of it, called new inflation. However, he himself noted that there are faults in this, which led him to propose his most famous model called chaotic inflation. In brief, it proposes that there is a ‘mother universe’ from which many new universes are spawned, and from them other universes are born – like bubbles. This process would continue forever. This theory suggests that though the new universes have a beginning, the principal universe does not.

Speaking on the overall pre-eternality of the universe, he said, ‘The most difficult aspect of this problem is not the existence of the singularity itself, but the question of what was before the singularity... This problem lies somewhere at the

¹⁹³ *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, p. 135.

boundary between physics and metaphysics.’¹⁹⁴ Because of this problem, and because of the lack of impetus to affirm anything beyond the realm of physics, Linde assumed a model that negated a beginning and end for time. Just as the principal universe is pre-eternal, he argued that new universes would endlessly continue to be made. As thus, he could escape the notion of singularity and the *a priori* questions that come with it. In other words, he evaded searching for a cause for the emergence of the universe by making it (somewhat) pre-eternal. When we analyse this model – and all previous models – we can see that none of them are based on science. They are at best assumptions. In fact, they are just hypotheses that are designed to avoid the problem of an absolute beginning for the universe. This is why many physicists believe it is impossible to demonstrate – let alone test – the validity of these theories through evidence.

In 1994, Arvind Borde and Alexander Vilenkin published a paper. It stated that all models of future inflation could only work from a point of initial singularity, and that there must be a beginning for the universe. This paper was further developed and its conclusions were published in partnership with Alan Guth in 2001. It was further incremented and republished in 2003. The title of the paper is ‘Inflationary spacetimes are not past-complete’.¹⁹⁵ Through calculations, this short four-page paper clarifies that in any expanding universe, the relative velocity of things increases every time we retreat into the past; however, this velocity cannot continue infinitely because, as per modern physics, nothing can travel faster than the speed of light (299,792 km per second approximately). Therefore, there must be a boundary at which this relativistic velocity stops, and it is this that corresponds to the beginning of the universe.

Vilenkin re-emphasised the conclusion of this study in a 2012 conference held at Cambridge to celebrate Stephen Hawking’s 70th birthday.¹⁹⁶ As stated before, Vilenkin is the one who famously said, ‘Did the universe have a beginning? At this point, it seems that the answer to this question is probably yes.’¹⁹⁷ In fact, in his book *Many Worlds in One*, he 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.’¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ *Inflationary Universe*, p. 976.

¹⁹⁵ Borde, Guth, and Vilenkin, *Inflationary Spacetimes are not Past-Complete*, pp. 1-4. See: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/gr-qc/0110012.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ See *Big Bang, Big God: A Universe Fit for Life?* p. 62.

¹⁹⁷ *Answering Atheism*, p. 132.

¹⁹⁸ *Many Worlds in One*, p. 176.

Some additional discussion shall come in the second rational indicator, if Allah wills. This will be done when we look at the theory of the multiverse, which represents one of this theory's models.

Objections to the conclusion ‘God is the One Who brought the universe out of nothingness into existence’

First objection: Why Allah?

The background to this objection is this: Even if it is assumed that there is a cause behind the emergence of the world, how is Allah then automatically assumed to be that cause? This is one of the most famous objections of atheists. What is strange is that when Richard Dawkins discussed the argument from temporality for the existence of God in his infamous book *The God Delusion*, he offered only this objection:

Even if we allow the dubious luxury of arbitrarily conjuring up a terminator to an infinite regress and giving it a name, simply because we need one, there is absolutely no reason to endow that terminator with any of the properties normally ascribed to God: omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, creativity of design, to say nothing of such human attributes as listening to prayers, forgiving sins and reading innermost thoughts.¹⁹⁹

Then he focuses on the attributes of Allah ﷻ, and how it is possible for these to be His attributes. Upon further analysis, this strategy on his part – and by atheists in general – is a strategic evasion of the point under discussion, landing it onto a completely separate issue. Whoever uses this in evidence would be doing so to prove the existence of the non-contingent being, not its attributes. Jumping from the central point of the argument to an issue not tackled by its proponents reflects either a lack of impartiality or wanton ignorance of the rules of debate and philosophical discussion. Consider the following:

- One of the most significant areas of difference between atheism and theism is the belief of atheists in matter, and that there is no cause behind matter. The theist argument implies that there is a super-material cause that allowed the world to come into existence. This is part of the evidence – it is a brick within the construct of the rational indicator for Allah's existence ﷻ, namely that Allah ﷻ is different from His entire creation and the nature of the universe.
- The argument proves a number of issues related to the nature of this cause, which makes it a suitable argument to prove the

¹⁹⁹ *The God Delusion*, p. 77.

existence of Allah, as well as some of His attributes. If the universe came into existence after nothingness, its cause must be a creator through whom this universe was created. He must be pre-eternal, as the series of causes must stop at him so that a series of infinite causality does not arise. That is to say that he must not be an effect of another cause, as the universe needs a cause that is atemporal. Furthermore, the emergence of the universe has unique features to it, which makes it an entity that emerged from will; this points to an actor who carried out this deed through his own volition. This doer acting with his own volition must be alive, as there is a difference between a live actor and a dead actor. It also suggests great power, through which this event took place; without power, no such deed could have occurred. Thus, the act of the universe's creation suggests in itself some of the perfect attributes of Allah ﷻ.

- The point of this argument is not to prove the existence of Allah with *all* His perfect attributes. Rather, it is sufficient to prove the least amount that is required, which is that there is a Doer who acts with power and choice. This is the point of contention with atheists. Otherwise, beyond these basic attributes, proving other attributes of the Creator ﷻ can be achieved through other forms of rational evidence, such as the argument from providence, the teleological argument, or scriptural evidence, like Allah ﷻ informing His servants of the attributes He has. It is therefore an error to dupe the recipient of this information that the point of this argument was to prove both the existence of Allah ﷻ and *all* His perfect attributes, in which case objections may arise such as 'But it does not prove xyz attributes', for that would be totally off-topic and was never the point of the argument to begin with.

Second objection: God of the gaps

This is a well-known objection. Atheists say, 'The theists' answer to the question "What is the cause for the emergence of the world?" with Allah is ignorance of causality. It is as if theists are filling in the gaps of their ignorance with such an answer. Theists emphasise this ignorant stance of theirs by appealing to ignorance, and thus use as evidence the opponent's inability to dismantle it – nothing more. They fail to offer any proof for the evidentiary veracity of their statement.'

This rhetoric is another error on the part of atheists. Our affirmation of the existence of the Creator is not based on our inability to explain the ultimate cause of the universe, nor is it merely a blind leap of faith in which we shoved in the

concept of God to solve a problem for which we have no answer. Rather, our belief is a result of a set of rational and instinctive propositions that offers this conclusion.

Our belief of Allah being the cause for the existence of the universe is based on knowledge, not ignorance. As proven earlier, the universe is temporal. It is therefore either temporal with a cause behind it, or without a cause; the latter is impossible as temporal entities must have a cause. A cause would be either the temporal entity itself or something different; the former is impossible as it would have been non-existent before emergence – something that does not possess existence for itself cannot confer existence onto something else. Therefore, as it emerged from a separate cause, that cause must in itself be temporal or atemporal; if the former, this series must end at an atemporal cause, as infinite causality is impossible. Therefore, it becomes clear that our position is not merely the desire to fill in the gap left by ignorance, but is rather a considered and rational answer that relies on self-evident propositions.

The atheists' protracted leveraging of this objection is a reaction to old-age human haste in explaining many of the natural phenomena through direct divine intervention. These explanations did not realise that almost all of Allah's actions in His creation are through a set of laws and rules governing the system of the universe, as predetermined by Allah Himself. Atheists unjustly generalise this errant judgement across all reasoning processes used by believers of Allah ﷻ. That Allah acts in His universe and is the existence of causes is not strange to Islamic discourse; in fact, it is a point that is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an through the mention of many causes within natural phenomena. Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته الله said, 'Were we to list the total number of places from the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition that affirm causes, they would surpass 10,000 places without exaggeration.'²⁰⁰

I conclude this with some important words by Richard Swinburne in his book *Is There a God?*, where he critiqued this objection: 'Note that I am not postulating a "God of the gaps", a god merely to explain the things which science has not yet explained. I am postulating a God to explain what science explains; I do not deny that science explains, but I postulate God to explain why science explains. The very success of science in showing us how deeply orderly the natural world is provides strong grounds for believing that there is an even deeper cause of that order.'²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ *Shifā' al-'Alīl*, p. 189.

²⁰¹ *Is There A God?*, p. 62.

Third objection: Why the haste? Science will reveal the cause

This objection is actually a combination of a gross restriction of the definition of science on the one hand, and an exaggeration of it on the other. Atheists draw their existential philosophy from a purely material view: They have faith in only what the empirical sciences dictate, and they accept only natural material explanations for phenomena. As thus, there is no room for any supernatural or metaphysical explanation. Check what the atheist Scott Todd said – he stated in clear terms what this outlook meant: ‘Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic.’²⁰²

The Darwinist and atheist Richard Lewontin said,

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfil many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.²⁰³

This exaggerated view of the capabilities of the empirical natural sciences, which is clearly partial to a narrow view of materialism, has a name coined for it in scientific and philosophical circles: scientism. It is a portmanteau of ‘science’ and the suffix ‘-ism’. It represents the ideology of the exaggerated view of the empirical sciences, restricting knowledge only to them. The roots of this ideology are actually ancient. The direction of this philosophy was steered by Auguste Comte, who formulated positivist philosophy, which spawned multiple schools of philosophy. Exaggeration on materialism only got worse as time went by. It is not a concealed fact that part of the justification of this exaggeration goes back to huge scientific and technological achievements driven by the scientific method. It was a turning point for humankind at all levels, in ways that could not have been imagined. However, the problem with this was how it looked down on other

²⁰² *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*, p. 9.

²⁰³ <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/01/09/billions-and-billions-of-demons/>

modes of the acquisition of knowledge, and how it attempted to confine knowledge acquisition to its own method, details, complexities, and distinctive ways. It is a methodological problem that leads to mass scientific problems, which are clear for all to see. The accuracy of empiricism, upon which scientism is based, is known to work either through its own method or an external method. If our understanding of the accuracy of empiricism is based on empiricism itself, that would be false, as it would become a circular argument; it would also be a self-contradiction as it is improper to suggest that a claim is evidence unto itself. However, if empiricism as a method is verified by an external source, our objective would have been achieved: An external source of knowledge acquisition other than empiricism was used to verify empiricism.

The fact is that every knowledge field has its own tools and cognitive sources; therefore, the attempt to force empiricism onto every field of knowledge, and to believe that it alone is suitable to answer everything, would become a methodological and cognitive problem, which would in turn lead to multiple scientific problems. The science and knowledge fields in themselves reveal these sorts of problems. History, for example, has its own sources; similarly mathematics; likewise all other subjects. The idea that the empirical scientific method alone is the tool to acquire knowledge contradicts the multiplicity of sources that are part and parcel across all subjects. In the debate between William Lane Craig and the atheist Peter Atkins, the deep-rooted confusion of atheists was exposed, as it was demonstrated to be incapable of using science to explain everything, which is exactly what Atkins was proposing during the debate.

This exaggerated outlook on the natural sources of information is like a man who goes out with a metal detector to a shore, in the hope of finding a lost ring, earring, or jewellery. Imagine you met that person and he told you that in the year he had been using this device, he did not come across even a single piece of plastic in his life, leading him to the conclusion that there is no plastic on that shore. You want to tell him that this device only detects metals, but he interjects to tell you: 'I believe there is no plastic at all, because this detector has never revealed even a single piece of plastic.' One cannot but wryly smile at him, knowing that the metal detector he is carrying is itself part-plastic. Thus, though natural and empirical knowledge is able to offer plenty of information on natural phenomena, this does not mean it is able to offer knowledge in all possible fields. It is a gross error to restrict the source of knowledge to this. The pathways to knowledge are as varied as the sciences, subjects, and fields of knowledge.

There are multiple writings, studies, and lectures that speak of the problems of scientism. The exaggerated vision of this outlook has rendered it into extreme dogma. Contemporary books of benefit in this regard, which deal specifically with

New Atheism, include *The Science Delusion* by Rupert Sheldrake²⁰⁴, and *The Devil's Delusion* by the agnostic mathematician David Berlinski. More recently, I have come across a book by my friend, Dr. Ḥusām al-Dīn Ḥāmid, called *al-Iḥād: Wuthūqiyyah al-Tawahhum wa-Khuwā' al-'Adam (Atheism: Reliability of the Delusion and Emptiness of Nothingness)*. It is an excellent book and offers some decent analysis in these issues.

The British atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel has a book titled *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. The subheading expresses the central thesis of the book, which is quite significant. The book strives to point out the problem of narrow materialism and its utter incapability of explaining many of the phenomena of the natural world and the universe. The book reveals the great problem that scientism and atheists suffer from. It presents three key issues that Darwinism cannot offer a solution to: consciousness, cognition, and value. It also highlights the need to broaden the horizons of knowledge in order to gain a deeper understanding of knowledge and its existential reality.

Obviously, as this exaggerated view of science has become inexorably intertwined with atheism, atheist discourse is absolutely convinced that science stands against religion; in fact, atheists argue that science naturally leads to atheism. They add that religious naturalists are in fact not loyal to scientific principles, and dupe people by adopting faith. For example, Sam Harris critiqued some naturalists who, in his estimation, represent moderate religion: 'It is time that scientists and other public intellectuals observed that the contest between faith and reason is zero-sum. There is no question but that nominally religious scientists like Francis Collins and Kenneth R. Miller are doing lasting harm.'²⁰⁵

When Francis Collins was appointed director at the American National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) under the National Institute of Health (NIH) agency, he was the subject of a vicious campaign by Sam Harris. Harris said that Collins's religion would adversely impact scientific research, and that he is in denial of the scientific and material vision for existence. Jerry Coyne also attacked Collins, stating, 'He is polluting science with faith — and hurting public understanding of science — by pretending that empirical evidence points to the existence of God.'²⁰⁶ The militant atheist PZ Myers said 'He is a creationist dupe arguing against scientific theories.'²⁰⁷ Collins was also described as a 'clown', and a talk that Collins gave at Berkeley titled *The Language of God:*

²⁰⁴ Though the book is good for revealing some of scientism's problems, it is unfortunately a reactionist work with some exaggeration, with some of its own problems in its central thesis. It should therefore be read with a discerning mind. Sheldrake has a TED lecture, which sparked such a wide debate that the TED website initially withdrew it, but then reuploaded it after a backlash.

²⁰⁵ <https://www.samharris.org/blog/the-politics-of-ignorance>

²⁰⁶ <https://whyevolutionistrue.com/2009/07/27/francis-collins-pollutes-science-with-religion/>

²⁰⁷ Translator's note: <https://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2006/08/26/darwins-deadly-legacy-what-tri>

Intellectual Reflections of a Christian Geneticist was described as ‘a genuinely appalling load of rubbish’.²⁰⁸

This is despite the fact that Collins has to his name some actual great scientific feats that surpass those of his critics. Yet, his ardent defence of evolution (which Christopher Hitchens praised him for), his critique of intelligent design, and his extremely lukewarm attitude to religion could not save him from the atheists’ wrath. Their problem was not because of Collins’s pattern of religious behaviour or the number of concessions he could offer – their problem is with religion itself, no matter how it looks like.

When atheists set out this scientific view of theirs, it is based on an obsession to negate the notion that Allah ﷻ exists. Their dismissive attitude means they cannot even honestly entertain the notion that there can be – just possibly – the chance of a Creator Who created this universe in the manner that He did: that He is the cause of life, that He is the origin of the rules, laws, and constants of the universe, and so on. This attitude can be clearly detected in their discussions and debates with scientists who support intelligent design. Their derisive language fills their rhetoric wherever they discuss these matters. Their aggressive attitude to alternative views is obvious, where they treat them like pseudoscience. Their lectures and debates with leading proponents of intelligent design in this regard are accessible. As an example, I invite readers to watch the debate between Stephen Meyer and Peter Ward to see for themselves how they behave.

The attitude in denying the existence of Allah ﷻ and casting Him outside the scientific scene has stopped some people from accepting certain widely accepted scientific theories, all under the pretence that they have philosophical implications that can support the existence of Allah. Some are forced to accept alternative scientific theories simply because they insist on not having Allah in the equation. This is indeed a strange thing and calls for some pause. New Atheists, with their disposition to scientism, sometimes showcase a deep-seated bigotry in favour of some aspects of science they hold dear. This bigotry reveals the deep methodological flaw in their cognitive construct. It also reveals that they do indeed have faith in the unseen; however, as alluded to earlier on, it constitutes believing in only those aspects of the unseen that agree with their materialistic mindset and atheist beliefs.

The point here is to emphasise that the state of atheism stops short of following the rational implications of the evidence in front of them that ultimately leads to Allah. This goes back to a preconceived cognitive bias on their part, which casts aside the possibility that the correct answer on the question of the cause of the world’s temporality is Allah. This is not because the evidence does not point to that, but because they put in place certain conditions on how an acceptable answer

²⁰⁸ <https://www.scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2009/07/27/monday-must-be-pick-on-francis>

should be. This also explains how they stop short from accepting the implications of scientific evidence. It also reveals one of the core differences between atheists and theists, as partiality to different outlooks on the universe is what brings them to adopt these kinds of positions. The problem with atheists is not in individual issues or some odd detail, but it rather consumes their entire cognitive methodology and how evidence-based reasoning should work. It is therefore natural that these distinct views would lead to such disparate conclusions.

Such an objection by atheists – by simply referring to a future of science that is unknown, which they claim will ultimately reveal the cause of the universe – is in reality ignorance that is compensated only by having faith in an unknown and unseen future scientific discovery. Ironically, this can be referred to as the ‘science of the gaps’, which is a form of summoning the unknown to discredit an opponent’s view without having to offer any objective evidence. It is an expression of deep faith to explain what is still, scientifically speaking, the unseen. The problem with such faith is that it removes its protagonist from the prospect of ever impartially assessing any evidence for the existence of Allah. So even if a clear miracle were to occur in front of his eyes, he can simply turn around and say that he would never believe in the miracle or its implications, as future empirical science will one day reveal what exactly occurred. Further details on this issue will follow.

Fourth objection: The universe has no cause at all, or it caused itself

This idea has spread across atheist circles recently. It has become a key objection to the argument from creation and invention. This objection claims the universe to be self-sufficient and not dependent on a founder, or that it has the power to make itself, or that it is possible it emerged from nothing.

This notion was proposed by Bertrand Russell in his book *Why I Am Not a Christian*, and is covered extensively in *The Grand Design*, co-authored by the famous theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. It is the same claim made by the famous atheist Lawrence Krauss in his book *A Universe From Nothing*, in which he claims that the universe – in light of modern physics – can emerge from nothing without the need for an external entity that would explain this emergence; rather, the emergence of the universe is from nothing.

In the beginning of *The Grand Design*, there is a discussion on the type of questions that the book seeks to offer an answer to, and the source of information that feeds into these answers:

We each exist for but a short period of time, and in that time explore but a small part of the whole universe. But humans are a curious species. We wonder, we seek answers. Living in this vast world that is by turns kind and cruel, and gazing at the immense heavens above,

people have always asked a multitude of questions: How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? Most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about these questions, but almost all of us worry about them some of the time. Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge. The purpose of this book is to give the answers that are suggested by recent discoveries and theoretical advances. They lead us to a new picture of the universe and our place in it that is very different from the traditional one, and different even from the picture we might have painted just a decade or two ago.²⁰⁹

These answers are laden with materialist and atheist mentality, and at the same time are divorced from rational facts. The book claims that ‘because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing...’²¹⁰ The problems in this passage come to light at the most cursory of investigations. Gravity is describing the natural phenomenon that is present across the universe, which could not have existed before the universe existed; how could it therefore be the cause for the universe coming into existence? (The mathematician John Lennox has a treatise, *God and Stephen Hawking*, in which he challenged the views of Hawking. This small work exposes the scientific and philosophical holes in *The Grand Design* and refutes many of its claims).

As for Lawrence Krauss, he attempted in his book *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing* to convince readers that modern physics underlines that the universe could have emerged from nothing. The philosopher and physicist David Albert wrote a highly critical review on it in the *New York Times*, ‘On the Origin of Everything’.²¹¹ The Darwinist and atheist Jerry Coyne agreed with much of his critique, acknowledging that Krauss’s book was weak and that he was surprised by the commendations it received, especially the one by Dawkins towards the end of the book.²¹² It is interesting to note that Krauss did not directly respond to Albert’s review, though he did call him a ‘moronic philosopher’²¹³, even though Albert – like Krauss himself – has a doctorate in theoretical physics. The instinct of the mind governs that every temporal event

²⁰⁹ *The Grand Design*, p. 13.

²¹⁰ *The Grand Design*, p. 227.

²¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/books/review/a-universe-from-nothing-by-lawrence-m-krauss.html>

²¹² <https://whyevolutionistrue.com/2012/04/02/David-albert-pans-lawrence-krauss-new-book/>

²¹³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/04/has-physics-made-philosophy-and-religion-obsolete/256203/>

has a cause, and that it is impossible for something to happen without a cause, or that it is the cause unto its own emergence. This is precisely what Allah ﷻ alludes to in the Qur'an: 'Or were they created by nothing, or are they their own creators?'²¹⁴

As atheists have discarded these rational axioms, it is not surprising that they assert that the universe could have come into existence from nothing. The problem is compounded when they claim that this is what science says. The correct position is to adhere to rational axioms and to use them to judge knowledge gained by observing nature, not by flipping the formula and duping people into thinking that nature possesses phenomena that contradict these instinctive concepts, and therefore the concepts can be abandoned. If that were to happen, any knowledge that can possibly be acquired would fall apart. How can one believe that he is seeking to uncover the causes of natural phenomena when he is in denial of the principle of causality?

Explaining the impossibility of something occurring from nothingness, Ibn Taymiyyah رحمته الله said,

The position that a temporal entity can originate without an originator is impossible...for a number of reasons:

1. 'It contains the idea that a contingent entity can be preferred for existence over non-existence, without anyone exercising preponderance. This is because both the existence and non-existence of every originated entity are equally possible. If its existence would not have been possible, it would not have come into existence. As thus, that it exists means its existence was preferred over its non-existence, which requires someone exercising preponderance.
2. 'It contains the idea that its emergence was designated at a specific time and in a specific manner. The assignment of one of two equal characteristics – which would make it (existence) win over the other (non-existence) – must have an assigner.'²¹⁵

I cannot compute how someone can comprehend that the universe emerged from nothingness, but then he seeks out the causes that are behind those events that he witnesses. Would he be convinced if he were to be rendered unable of knowing that the cause came about without cause? Is there anyone who would be convinced that it is possible for a rabbit to emerge from an empty hat? What is more surprising is the bravado with which these people show off when they critique philosophy and the importance of rational investigation, despite the fact

²¹⁴ *Al-Tūr*, 35.

²¹⁵ *Dar' Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, 8/293.

that they fall into the trap of contradicting self-evident truths in such a pitiful manner. In fact, they go on to make assertions that are highly eccentric and contradictory.

Take, for example, Lawrence Krauss and his book. The idea behind it is that the universe, as per the laws of space physics, comes out into existence from nothingness. A quick read of the book would reveal that this nothingness he is talking about is not a nothingness in reality, but rather a spatial gap that is surging with activity and energy, in which fine particles come and go. Therefore, it is not an actual nothingness that we would typically infer from the term, but rather it is an existing and subsisting entity. The question therefore remains: How did this come about? The most Krauss did was a play on words by defining nothingness with his personal definition, in order for him to turn around and dictate to us about how something can emerge from nothing.

It is noteworthy that during his discussion with Cardinal George Pell (head of the Catholic Church in Australia) on *ABC's Q&A* programme in Australia, Dawkins attempted to explain his understanding of the 'nothing' that Krauss spoke of. He said,

The nothing that Lawrence Krauss is talking about, whether or not it's what a naive person would conceive as nothing or what a sophisticated physicist would consider to be nothing it is going to be something much simpler than a creative intelligence. We are struggling – we are all struggling, scientists are struggling – to explain how we get the fantastic order and complexity of the universe out of very simple and therefore easy to understand, easy to explain, beginnings. Lawrence Krauss calls the substrate of his explanation nothing. It's possible to dispute whether nothing is quite the right word, but whatever it is it is very, very simple...

At this point, the audience burst into laughter. Dawkins shouted, 'Why is that funny!?' Cardinal Bell noted: 'Well I think it's a bit funny to be trying to define nothing!' The audience laughed out again. Yet, in the same discussion, Dawkins said, 'Of course it's counter intuitive that you can get something from nothing. Of course, common sense doesn't allow you to get something from nothing. That's why it's interesting. It's got to be interesting in order to give rise to the universe at all. Something pretty mysterious had to give rise to the origin of the universe.'²¹⁶

It would seem that the conflation between 'something' and 'nothing' is quite pronounced, as he could no longer see the problems in his own statements. The irony here is that just a few days before this debate, Dawkins had sat down with Krauss on a public stage and highly recommended his book, stating that he was

²¹⁶ ABC Network.

extremely impressed by Krauss's idea that the universe came from nothing – an assertion he agreed with quite literally.²¹⁷ In fact, Dawkins's recommendation found at the end of Krauss's book was so exaggerated that he likened Krauss to Darwin, in that Krauss's book has the same significance in the field of physics in potentially dethroning religious views like how Darwinist biology challenged creationist views.

Fifth objection: So who created Allah?

This is one of the most famous atheist objections against believers. It is a key rational doubt against theism in atheist discourse. Upon contemplation, it is just sparring rhetoric – nothing more. Their entire belief system rests upon the notion that Allah did not create the world. Therefore, their objection 'So who created Allah?' would be typical of believers' experiences. In most contexts, these are simply tools for unfruitful quarrel and objection.

When studying the many atheist personalities that have gone by, we can easily uncover how many had this objection, and how this question took control and pressurised many minds. It is one of the most important doubts that introduced the inclination to atheism in many people. John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell, David Hume, and Stephen Hawking have all stated that this question represents a problem in theism, which ultimately led them to adopt, or become convinced by, atheism. It is noted that this is also the central question in the book *The God Delusion*. In almost every instance, this question is heavily present in, and at the forefront of, New Atheism discourse, which one can detect by studying its writings, articles, debates, and other materials.

The problems brought about by this question can be dispelled by the following points:

1. This is obviously not a new question. In fact, it is quite a natural question for people to think about. It is ultimately one of Satan's evil suggestions, and is founded on a hugely erroneous proposition.
2. This question is based on an error perpetrated by atheist discourse. It is a gross misunderstanding of the precise nature of the rational evidence for faith offered by theists. The question carries the following conceptualisation of the argument from creation and invention to support the existence of Allah ﷻ:
 - Everything in existence must have a cause.
 - The universe exists, and therefore it must have a cause.
 - The cause for its existence is Allah.

²¹⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUe0_4rdj0U

The inevitable question after this is: ‘Allah exists, but who made Him?’ The reason why this question is faulty is that the argument from creation and invention, as presented in this manner, is different to the precise nature of the argument in its proper image, as offered by those who want to demonstrate the existence of Allah ﷻ. We did not claim that *everything in existence* has a cause. Rather, our claim is that *everything which is temporal* must have a cause. As for any particular existing entity, its existence a) can be non-contingent and necessary, such that minds can only envisage it to exist, and by its very nature, it is not dependent on any cause that gave rise to it; b) is contingent and therefore merely possible, with its existence dependent on a self-subsisting necessary entity; or c) is impossible, such that the mind cannot envisage its existence.

3. This question is pointless. When a person says, ‘Who then created Allah?’, the question would be inherent of self-contradiction, rendering the question meaningless. If the question has no meaning, then obviously there would be no case to answer it.

Imagine if, in response to this question, an answer is offered that is aligned with what theists believe in, such as: ‘Nobody created Him because He is uncreated.’ Imagine if then someone objects to this answer by saying, ‘We did not ask whether He is created or not. Rather, what we are asking about is who created Him.’ The fact is that Allah ﷻ is not a temporal being to begin with, thus rendering this question inapplicable to Him. He ﷻ is the First – there is nothing before Him ﷻ. Questions like this are more like impossible questions that the other side cannot offer a valid answer to, not because they are unable to answer, but because the question itself is faulty.

If a man asked you about the length of the fourth side in a triangle, it would be impossible to answer, because triangles only have three sides to them. If you are told, ‘A male gave birth to a girl – what is her name?’, the question itself would be faulty as it carries a false premise that renders it incapable of receiving an answer, because males cannot give birth. Therefore, the reality of the ‘Who then created Allah?’ question is essentially ‘Who created the one who has no creator?’, or ‘What is the cause for that which is without cause?’, or ‘What preceded the thing that has nothing before it?’ All these questions cannot be answered, as they carry a faulty premise, rendering them unqualified to be answered.

Inherent to accepting a question as admissible and searching for an answer to it is to grant the questioner that his question is not self-contradictory. Given that the question has been demonstrated to be faulty and self-contradictory, then to treat such a question as admissible would be tantamount to abdicating the law of non-contradiction. Such an abdication is invalid and impossible, given that the

law of non-contradiction is an instinctive rational concept that exposes the faulty premise of the question.

On the other hand, the question ‘How did the universe come into existence?’ appears to be a legitimate question and not self-contradictory. This is why this question has remained present throughout human history. The question of ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ is a classical question in philosophy.

4. This question is present in prophetic discourse. The Prophet ﷺ revealed the source of the question in one’s heart, how prevalent it is in society, the techniques to repel it, and how to deal with its aftereffects.
 - On the authority of Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Satan comes to one of you and says, “Who created so and so?” until he says, “Who created your Lord?” So, when he casts such a question, one should seek refuge with Allah and cease such thoughts.’²¹⁸
 - On the authority of ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Satan will never cease coming to anyone from you and saying, “Who created the heavens and Earth?” and he replies, “Allah.” He will then say, “So who created you?” – he will reply, “Allah.” He will then say, “Who created Allah?” If anyone from you senses this, he should say, “I have faith in Allah and His Messenger.”’²¹⁹
 - In a narration, the Prophet ﷺ revealed how widespread this question is among his nation – and among people in general: ‘People will continue to ask one another questions, until “Allah created the creation, so who created Allah?” is uttered. Whoever feels any of this, he should say, “I believe in Allah.”’²²⁰
 - In another narration: ‘People are on the cusp of asking each other until one of them says, “This is Allah – He created the creation, so who created Allah?” When they say that, say, “He is Allah – One and Indivisible. Allah is the Sustainer needed by all. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him.” Then he should spit on his left thrice and seek refuge in Allah from satan.’²²¹

²¹⁸ Narrated by Bukhārī, hadith no. 3276, and Muslim, hadith no. 362.

²¹⁹ Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, hadith no. 150; declared authentic by Arnā’ūt.

²²⁰ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 360

²²¹ Narrated by Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, hadith no. 10422.

- On the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘People will just keep on asking until they say, “This is Allah, Creator of all things, so who created Allah?”’²²²
- In the narration of Muslim, it reads: ‘Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Your nation will keep saying, ‘What is this? What is this?’, until they say this: ‘Allah created the creation, so who created Allah?’”’²²³
- The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained that this question is a way by which satan can cause deviation: ‘People will keep asking. They will say, “What is this? What is this?”, until they say, “Allah is the Creator of people, so who created Allah?” At that moment, they will go astray.’²²⁴
- The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم alerted Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that he would be asked that same question – and this indeed came to pass. He said, ‘When I was in the mosque, some Bedouins came to me and said, “O Abū Hurayrah, this is Allah, so who created Allah?”’ The narration reads that he took some stones in the palm of his hand and pelted them, saying, ‘Go away, go away – my friend spoke the truth.’²²⁵
- In another narration: ‘As he held the hand of a man, Abū Hurayrah said, “Allah and His Messenger were truthful. Two people have already asked me this – this is the third”, or “One person has already asked me – this is the second.”’²²⁶
- In another narration from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: ‘By Allah, one day, I was sitting when a man from Iraq said to me, “This is Allah, He created us, so who created Allah?” I placed my finger in my ear and shouted out: “Allah and His Messenger are truthful. He is Allah – One and Indivisible. Allah is the Sustainer needed by all. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him.”’²²⁷
- Some Companions are reported to have taken a severe disliking to this question out of respect to their Lord صلى الله عليه وسلم. On the authority of Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: ‘Some people from the Companions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came and asked him, “We find in ourselves thoughts that we would consider far too heinous to utter.” He said, “And

²²² Narrated by Bukhārī, hadith no. 7296.

²²³ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 368.

²²⁴ Narrated by Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, hadith no. 647.

²²⁵ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 366.

²²⁶ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 364.

²²⁷ Narrated by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*, hadith no. 9015; Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ said, ‘Authentic – this is a sound chain.’

you have felt these?” They said, “Yes.” He said, “That is evident faith (*īmān*).”²²⁸

- In the hadith of Ibn ‘Abbās: ‘A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah, some of us feel such thoughts that we would prefer to become charred burning embers than having to utter them.” He said, “Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Praise is for Allah Who reduced his plot to whispers.”²²⁹
- In another narration: ‘A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah, I think to myself such things that falling from the sky would be better for me than having to utter them.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Praise is for Allah Who reduced his plot to whispers.”²³⁰
- One narration with a questionable chain is what Aḥmad reported in his *al-Musnad*, hadith no. 10970: Ja‘far said, ‘It has reached me that the Prophet ﷺ said, “When people ask you about this, say, ‘Allah was before everything. Allah created everything. Allah shall be after everything.’”²³¹

From these hadiths, one is able to come across the prophetic treatment prescribed for this doubt, and how to cut off satan’s whisperings:

- a) Seeking refuge in Allah.
- b) Saying, ‘I have faith in Allah and His Messenger’.
- c) Saying, ‘He is Allah – One and Indivisible. Allah is the Sustainer needed by all. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him.’
- d) Spitting action on one’s left.
- e) To cease allowing such thoughts.

Scholarly viewpoints differ over the nature of the prophetic prescription and how it is to be applied. Explaining the hadith, Nawawī said, ‘It means to turn away from these false thoughts and to beg Allah ﷻ to make them go away. Imam Māzarī رحمته الله said,

²²⁸ Narrated by Muslim, hadith no. 357.

Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī said, ‘Evident faith is what prevents you from accepting what satan casts within you and believing him. It does not mean that the whispering per se is evident faith. Whisperings are born from the act and enticement of satan – how could it therefore be evident faith?’ (*Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, 1/110)

²²⁹ Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, hadith no. 5114.

²³⁰ Narrated by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*, hadith no. 2097; Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūṭ said, ‘Authentic as per the condition of the two Shaykhs.’

²³¹ On its chain, Albānī said, ‘*Mu‘dal* (i.e., missing two links).’ (*Al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 1/236)

“The apparent meaning of the hadith is that he ﷺ commanded them to repel these thoughts by ignoring them, and by rejecting them without going through the process of reasoning and analysis to negate them. What can be said here is that thoughts are of two types...as for those doubts that are not settled, they should be repelled only through reasoning and analysis.” And Allah knows best. As for his statement, “...one should seek refuge with Allah and cease such thoughts”, it means that when one is faced by this whispering, he should resort to Allah ﷻ to repel its evil from himself, avoid dwelling on it, and know that this thought is from the whisperings of satan – all he strives for is to corrupt and lead astray. He should therefore avoid offering his whisperings any attention and hasten to detach himself from them by preoccupying himself with something else. And Allah knows best.²³²

As it can be observed, the states of people vis-à-vis being overcome by doubt really are of two types, as Māzarī ﷺ pointed out. Most people can repel such questions and objections by desisting and ignoring them. As for those who dwell on this question and doubts arose as a result, they would need evidence and proof to dispel that doubt in order to return balance to their *fiṭrah*.

The question remains whether or not the aforementioned hadiths are void of mentioning any evidence that would dispel the doubt. For this issue, Ibn Taymiyyah offered a highly beneficial and detailed tract, the entire length of which I am quoting here due to its importance. In his momentous work *Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, he said,

One person who was on the method of these people – like Rāzī and others – was asked, “When confronted with this whispering, why did the Prophet ﷺ not order for a process of evidence that would explain the fallacy of serial infinity and circularity, and instead ordered to seek refuge?” He answered: “This is like one who is confronted by a dog barking at him, who is about to harm him and cut off on his path. So, he sometimes strikes it with his staff; on other occasions, he asks the dog owner to reprimand it...so proof would be the first way, which has some difficulty, and seeking refuge in Allah is the second, which is simpler.” Some have objected to this question, stating that this means the proof method is stronger and more complete. But that is not the case; the seeking refuge method is more complete and stronger, since for Allah to remove whispering from the heart is more wholesome than if man were to remove it from himself. In response, it is submitted that the question is false, and each of its answers is

²³² *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2/155.

based on false premises and are therefore false as well. This is because the statement is based on the following notions:

- a) That these questions occurring to a person's soul can be repelled through two ways: proof and seeking refuge.
- b) That the Prophet ﷺ commanded to seek refuge.
- c) That the proof method is the way to explain the fallacy of circularity and serial infinity.
- d) That the proof method shuts down the questions that transpire to a person's soul without the need for doing what the Prophet ﷺ mentioned.
- e) That the Prophet ﷺ did not command to adopt the proof method.

This is an error from a number of angles. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ commanded the proof method where it ought to be instructed. He pointed out all the comprehensive sets of proofs that analysts can look at; he also pointed out the proofs that are above and beyond the analysts' deduction capabilities. In repelling these whisperings, he did not only command to seek refuge. Rather, he enjoined adopting faith, seeking refuge, and desisting from entertaining such thoughts. The only way of achieving salvation and felicity is through what he commanded – there is no other way.

This can be further explained through a number of ways:

- i. The proof by which knowledge can be acquired via analysis must end at innate and instinctive propositions. Any knowledge that is not instinctive must end up at instinctive knowledge. This is because if theoretical propositions are always proven from theoretical propositions, this would lead to an epistemic circularity or causal regressive infinity for an entity that has a beginning – both of which are false by necessity and the agreement of all rational people.

Acquired theoretical knowledge is that which can be attained by analysing known and necessary propositions that do not need analysis. Had those propositions also been theoretical, knowledge would have become contingent on another set, then another set, then another set, triggering serial infinity of theoretical knowledge in man. Yet man is temporal – he came into existence after having been non-existent. The knowledge in his heart is also temporal. Therefore, if his heart cannot acquire knowledge without having knowledge prior to it, it would automatically mean that his heart cannot gain any knowledge to begin with. Therefore, it is necessary for him to have basic and self-evident knowledge, which Allah would have preplaced

in his heart. Proof would ultimately stop at this knowledge. Furthermore, this instinctive knowledge may be subjected to doubts and whisperings, such as the doubts that sophists cast on sensory and self-evident knowledge. Examples of this are the doubts cast by Rāzī in the beginning of his *al-Muḥaṣṣal*. We have discussed those elsewhere. Doubts that are injurious to knowledge cannot be responded to through proof, because proof would ultimately stop at those doubts. Therefore, when doubt arises, the path to analysis and research is cut off. This is why one who denies sensory and instinctive knowledge should not be debated, for if he is an obstinate person in denial, he ought to be chastised until he acknowledges the truth; if he is mistaken – whether because of the adulteration of his senses or mind, resulting in his incapacity to understand knowledge, or whether it is for something else – he should be treated in a way that would enable him to acquire the prerequisites of, and remove the blocks to, knowledge acquisition; if he is unable because his health is poor, he should be treated with either natural remedies or through supplication, *ruqyah*, spiritual focus (*tawajjuh*), etc. Otherwise, he should be left alone. This is why rational people agree that not every doubt that arises can be removed through proof, analysis, or evidence-based reasoning. Only those who possess the preambles of knowledge and can observe these tools in a way that can offer him new knowledge should be engaged through these. Thus, whoever does not possess the preambles of knowledge, or is unable to analyse, cannot be engaged with via analysis or reasoning. Now this is clear, proof cannot dispel the whisperings and doubts that may have adversely affected a person’s instinctive knowledge. Conversely, when such a person thinks and analyses, these whisperings and doubts would increase in his heart, such that they would overcome him so badly he would be unable to repel them from himself, just like how he would be unable to solve a sophistic objection. Such doubts and whisperings may be repelled by seeking refuge in Allah, as He is the One Who grants refuge to the servant and protects him from doubts and predilections that have the potential to lead a man astray. This is why a servant is commanded to seek the guidance of his Lord in every prayer – he says, “Guide us along the Straight Path.”²³³

In the authentic hadith of the Divine, it is narrated on the authority of the Prophet ﷺ: “O My servants, all of you are astray, save the ones I guide. So ask for guidance from Me – I shall guide you.”

²³³ *Al-Fātiḥah*, 6.

Allah ﷻ said, “When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.”²³⁴

Allah ﷻ said, “And if you are tempted by Satan, then seek refuge with Allah. Indeed, He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”²³⁵

In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* on the authority of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad: “Two men started hurling insults at each other in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ. One of them became angry and his face turned red. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘I know of a statement that, had he said it, that would have disappeared from him: “I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed satan.”’”

So Allah ﷻ commands the servant to seek refuge from satan when reciting, so that his evil is warded off when the cause of good – reciting – is present; and to seek refuge when angered, so that the cause of evil (anger) is warded off. It is reported from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, “There is no heart among the hearts of servants except that it is between two Fingers of the Lord of Mercy’s Fingers – if He wills to keep it straight, He can do so; if He wills to cause it to deviate, He can do so.”

The oath phrase often used by the Prophet ﷺ was “I swear by the Turner of Hearts”. Oftentimes, he used to say, “By the One in Whose Hand the soul of Muhammad lies.” In another hadith, it says, “The heart swings more than water in a large pot when it reaches boiling point.”

The precedents for this principle are manifold. This is in addition to what all people know about themselves, i.e., how their hearts swing from one thought to another – whether it is in one’s beliefs or whether it is in what one wishes, and whether the thought is praiseworthy or not. Allah is the One Who can stave that off from him. As thus, seeking refuge in Allah is one pathway that leads to the goal, which analysis and reasoning simply cannot.

ii. The Prophet ﷺ did not only command to seek refuge. He ordered the servant to cease such thoughts, in conjunction with seeking refuge. He was essentially informing that this question is the final act of the whisperer; one must therefore refrain from the question. The question is not the first act of the whisperer. The soul yearns to know the cause of every event, and the origin of everything, until it reaches

²³⁴ *Al-Nahl*, 98.

²³⁵ *Fuṣṣilat*, 36.

the ultimate end. Allah ﷻ said, "...and that to your Lord alone is the ultimate return of all things."²³⁶ Among the reported supplications that Mālik mentioned in *al-Muwatta'* is: "Allah is enough for me and suffices. Allah listens – in acceptance – to the one who supplicates. There is no purpose beyond Allah."

So when a servant reaches the ultimate end, he must stop. If he wants to ask for something else after that, he must desist. The Prophet ﷺ commanded the servant to end by seeking Allah's protection from the whisperer – serial infinity. Likewise, anyone who has achieved the end goal and ultimate purpose is commanded to cease, for every seeker and student must have a goal and an aim where he needs to stop. The reason why he must stop is because every child of Adam whose *fiṭrah* is unadulterated knows by way of instinct and innate predisposition that it is a wrong question, and that it is impossible that the Creator of every creation has a creator. Had that been the case and had there not been an Ultimate Creator that is uncreated but was rather part of the creation, then this would be necessarily impossible, as creations cannot exist without a creator. This is something that is known instinctively and by way of *fiṭrah*, even if he does not think for a moment that this ends circularity and serial infinity. When we say that all originated things cannot possibly exist without an originator, this would be inclusive of the above. Every creation is originated. So if every originated thing must have an originator, then every creation must have a creator. The same applies when we say that every contingent entity must have a non-contingent entity. As the fallacy of this question is known by *fiṭrah* and instinct, the command of the Prophet ﷺ was to refrain from it. There is also a command to stop short of any fallacious question whose fallacy is known, like when it is said, "When did Allah emerge?" or "When will He die?", and similar...

iii. The Prophet ﷺ ordered the servant to say, "I believe in Allah", with the additional phrase "and His Messenger" as per another narration. This would be tantamount to facing down a harmful choice with its beneficial opposite. The statement "I believe in Allah" repels corrupt whispers from his heart.

This is why satan pulls back when Allah is remembered, and whispers when one is heedless of remembering Him. This is also why he is called 'the whisperer', and 'the retreator'. He is perched on the heart of the son of Adam: if he remembers Allah, he withdraws. The

²³⁶ *Al-Najm*, 42.

word *khannās* (retreater) is from *khunūs*, which means to hide low. This is why the stars have been referred to in the Qur'an as *khunnas*... So the Prophet ﷺ ordered the servant to say, "I believe in Allah", or "I believe in Allah and His Messenger", for this statement is faith personified. Remembering Allah repels the whisperings that are injurious to instinctive and innate knowledge. This whisper resembles the doubt many people face during worship, leading them to uncertainty over whether the *takbīr* was said or not, whether *al-Fātiḥah* was read or not, whether intention for worship was present or not, or whether a body part was washed during purification or not. It casts doubt in one's instinctive and sensory knowledge. His washing of a limb would have been something he saw with his own sight; his recitation of *takbīr* or *al-Fātiḥah* would be something he knew in his heart or heard with his ears; likewise his intention for prayer; likewise his intention to eat, drink, ride, or walk. His knowledge of all these things is instinctive, definite, and comes naturally to him – it is not dependent on analysis, reasoning, or proof. Rather, it is the prelude to proofs and their fundamentals, upon which theoretical proof is to be based. When whispered that he did not wash his face, have intention, or say *takbīr*, it can end when a servant seeks refuge, desists from asking further questions, and says, "Of course I washed my face", "Of course I had intention and said *takbīr*". He should stay firm on the truth and repel any whisper that opposes it – satan would then see his firmness and steadfastness upon the truth, after which he would move away from him. Otherwise, when he sees him amenable to suspicions and doubts, and the type that affords a response to whispers and dangerous thoughts, he would burden him with things that he would be unable to repel. In this case, his heart would become a target point for the adverse influences and shrouded in adorned rhetoric by the satans of both humankind and demonkind. He would then move from there to other more wicked things, until satan leads him to ultimate doom. So Allah is "the Guardian of the believers – He brings them out of darkness and into light. As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness."²³⁷ "Indeed, when Satan whispers to those mindful of Allah, they remember their Lord then they start to see things clearly."²³⁸ Even though we have pointed it out in many instances, it would be appropriate here to be cognisant of the fact that many aspects of knowledge are instinctive and innate, such that when a person seeks to demonstrate evidence for them, it would become

²³⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 257.

²³⁸ *Al-A'raf*, 201.

obscure and doubt might seep in, whether because of its lengthy propositions, or whether because the propositions are unclear, or both. A person attempting to reason might be unable to organise evidence for it, either because he is incapable of properly conceptualising it or because he is unable to express it. Not every conceptualisation can be orally expressed by every person. Sometimes, the listener might be unable to understand that evidence. Even if the evidence could be organised and understood, there might still be an incapacity to dispel the doubts that oppose the evidence, on the part of either the reasoner or the listener – or both.²³⁹

5. From what has preceded, it is clear that the ‘Who then created Allah?’ question is cognitively incorrect, as it combines two mutually contradictory assertions: It implies that Allah is created, which means He has a beginning; and it implies that Allah should have no beginning.

However, an atheist might claim that the claim of Allah not having a beginning is an arbitrary assertion. To answer: It has been well established that every temporal entity must have a cause. We can appreciate that this cause is most likely to be temporal as well, and it must also have a temporal cause of its own, and so on. However, there can be no doubt that the series of temporal causes must end at the first atemporal cause. Had it been temporal too, it would mean that it too would need a cause. This would lead to serial infinity, and a series of infinite causes is impossible.

To clarify further, we now mention some examples that reveal why this is impossible. One famous example for the impossibility of causal infinity is the example of the soldier and the prisoner: There is a soldier with a gun. There is a prisoner in front of him, and he wants to shoot him. However, he cannot do so until the officer behind him gives him permission. Now, let us assume that this officer cannot give permission unless another officer behind him gives permission...and so on in a never-ending series – the bullet would never be fired, as permission would never be forthcoming. If we are to assume that it was fired, that would mean that the order came from an army officer at whom the series of permission seeking ended. Typically, he would be the military official who is not in need of permission to give his order.

Another example: Assume we have a chandelier hanging from a chain. The first link would be the one holding the chandelier. But what is holding that link? Obviously, it would be the link above that, and that link would be held by the link above that, and so on. Were we to assume that the chain links went on and on, that would be impossible, as it would mean the chandelier is hanging from thin air. It

²³⁹ *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, 3/308-319.

would need something that holds it in place, but it cannot be any of these links because they are all dependent on something else. If we see a chandelier hanging, we can automatically assume that there is a final link piece in the chain that is connected to a ceiling, even if this ceiling was so high we could not see where it is. Still, we would be convinced that the final link, wherever it may be, is tied to something that is not dependent on being tied to something else.

A third example: In dominoes, if one placed a piece vertically behind another vertically placed piece, the first would never fall until the one behind it falls on it, and the second would not fall unless the one behind it falls on it, and so on. If we assume that there is a piece behind every piece, and that no piece can fall until the one behind it falls, this would be impossible. If we see that the dominoes are starting to fall, we would be certain that there was a first domino that was moved, leading to the dominoes in front of it to fall until the very first domino.

The previous examples are merely a clarification for the principle stating that infinity in the series of causes and doers is impossible. In light of this impossibility, we can understand why Allah ﷻ is the ultimate cause for the existence of this universe – He has no beginning. If we went along with the ‘Who then created Allah?’ question and an answer is given to the atheist for argument’s sake, the atheist would then immediately ask, ‘Well, what created what created Allah?’, then he would utter ‘What created the entity that created the entity that created Allah?’, until no end. Given that we know that we exist right now in this universe, and that we are emergent beings who are dependent on a cause that granted us existence, we would be convinced that the series of causes must end at a first cause that, by essence, does not have a beginning. That first cause is Allah ﷻ.

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī said, ‘The cause that we affirm for the existence of the world is pre-eternal. Had it been temporal, it would have required another cause, and likewise that would have needed another, and so on into infinity – an impossibility, or that it would inevitably stop at a pre-eternal entity, which is what we assert. We call it the Maker of the World, and He must necessarily be acknowledged.’²⁴⁰

Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ said,

Affirming the Maker, with its many proofs and evidence, is innate and instinctive. At this point, we say there is no doubt in the events we witness, like the emergence of clouds, rain, harvest, trees, the Sun, man, others in the animal kingdom, night, day, etc. It is known by rational necessity that the originated must have an originator. An infinite series of originators – that the originator has an originator,

²⁴⁰ *Al-Iqtisād fī al-ʿItiqād*, p. 102.

and that originator has an originator, and so on – is impossible. This is known as serial infinity in causes and effects, which is impossible by the agreement of rational people, as has been explained in numerous places. The objections to this have been mentioned, such as the statements of Āmidī, Abharī, alongside those of Rāzī and others, even though it is self-evident and instinctive to the minds. Those alternative thoughts are the whispers of the satan. This is why the Prophet ﷺ commanded the servant – when he experiences that – to seek refuge in Allah from it and refrain from engaging with it. He said, “Satan comes to one of you and says, ‘Who created this? Who created that?’, and he would reply ‘Allah.’ So he would then say, ‘So who created Allah?’ When anyone of you finds this, he should seek refuge in Allah and stop.” It is known that no event can happen without an originator; when there are many events and sequences, their need for an originator would be even more pronounced. They are all originated, so they all need an originator. This can only end at an originator who is not dependent on anything else, but rather is pre-eternal in and of itself, which is Allah, ﷻ.²⁴¹

6. One problem associated with this objection is that it operates from anthropomorphic assumptions, which entails: ‘If the creation is created, then who created Allah?’ The fact is Allah is as He said of Himself: ‘There is nothing like Him, for He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.’²⁴²

When we know that the universe and everything in it is temporal, the cause that triggered its existence must be an entity that is external to the universe, ungoverned by the rules applicable to matter. As thus, there is no need to analogise the Creator to the creation.

So that we can understand the error of this question and realise that the laws of the creation are inapplicable to the Creator, think of a puppet in a puppet show. It is moved by strings that are attached to it, making it look like it is alive and moving. Imagine it spoke, looked up to the one causing it to move, and said, ‘So who is pulling your strings?’ This question would be wrong in its own right, as it would be a *non sequitur*. The gulf between the Lord ﷻ and His creation is far greater than this.

7. Let us assume for the sake of argument that you are unable to answer your question. Would it be logical to turn away from a

²⁴¹ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 16/444.

²⁴² *Al-Shūrā*, 11.

coherent answer just because you do not know an explanation for this answer?

It would be like a man who went to a cave and saw old inscriptions on its wall. He concluded that this cave was once upon a time inhabited by people, and that they were the ones who sketched these. However, our friend turns around and rejects this because he does not know anything about those cavemen. He asks questions like: ‘Where did they come from? Where did they go? What are their names? What was their complexion like? What gender were they?’ Would he be correct in abandoning what is known just because there are things about them that he does not know? This type of thinking leads to the mass elimination of any cognitive acquisition of causes, because all of them can be subjected to the same test. When a man is not content with an answer unless he gains the answers to the subsequent series of questions he posed, he would never be able to gain any knowledge.

8. One observation we can conclude with is that when atheists bring this question on Allah ﷻ, this act of theirs suggests a problem within themselves. They ask, ‘How can Allah be pre-eternal?’, yet they believe that the universe is pre-eternal (notwithstanding their varied expressions on this issue). As thus, the difference between us and them is not over affirming pre-eternality per se. All what we believe is that pre-eternality is unique to Allah, and that this is more proper and correct, primarily thanks to the various indicators supporting the temporality of this universe, and secondly thanks to the amazing fine-tuning of the universe construct that clearly points to a Magnificent Creator.

With this objection answered, we can conclude this section. We now turn to the discussion of the second rational indicator in favour of the existence of Allah ﷻ.

Chapter 5

THE SECOND RATIONAL INDICATOR FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH: THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The British physicist Paul Davies has an interesting book titled *The Goldilocks Enigma*. The book attempts to uncover a curious issue pertaining to the nature of the universe that we live in, in terms of how it is perfectly suitable and balanced for us, as if it were a Goldilocks universe.

As is known to anyone familiar with the term, this title is borrowed from a famous and popular children's story, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. In summary, a girl by the name of Goldilocks finds a bear house in the forest. Each bear has its own food, chair, and bed. Sampling each, Goldilocks finds that two of the three (belonging to the father and mother) are not suitable for her because they are too hot and too cold (food), too high or too low (chairs), and too hard or too soft (beds). The only one she finds suitable for herself are the ones belonging to the small bear. The similitude here is that the universe in which we live has been made in a masterful manner: It has been fine-tuned to such a great degree that, had it been any other way, it would not have been able to support life. From this, the teleological argument takes shape.

The argument has been used right across the religious spectrum and in all eras and geographies. For example, Rāzī said,

Fitrah testifies that the appearance of a house inscribed with unusual inscriptions and built in a finely balanced manner with wisdom and benefit cannot be possible without a knowledgeable scribe and a prudent builder. It is known that the signs of wisdom in the upper and lower worlds are far more than the manifestations of wisdom in that small house. Given that the original *fitrah* is a testament to the inscription needing a scribe, and the building needing a builder, this testament would be all the more so in the case of this entire world needing a maker that acts with choice and wisdom.²⁴³

²⁴³ *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, 19/94.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته said,

Allah رحمته predisposed His servants – and even animals – to take a liking to placing everything in its rightful place, to carry things out at their appropriate moment, and to acquire things in the desired manner. He also predisposed them to dislike the opposite and to go against the aforementioned methods. The first is indicative of the perfection, knowledge, power, and proficiency of the doer; its opposite is indicative of his own deficiency and the deficiency of his knowledge, power, and expertise. This is the *fitrah* that people simply cannot depart from. It is known that the one who predisposed them like this and placed this capacity in them would be worthier of these praiseworthy traits than they are. Allah رحمته places things in their rightful place. He makes them unique by assigning to them attributes, shapes, configurations, and sizes in a manner that He knows better than anyone else. He brings them out into the open – and that too at the only time suitable for them. One who possesses sound analysis and upright thought, and contemplates as one should do so, would testify to that in what he sees and knows. He would use what he witnesses in evidence for what is concealed. Everything is from the making of the Wise, the Omniscient. To demonstrate this, it suffices to know the wisdom behind creating animals, their limbs, attributes, configurations, the benefit that can be derived from them, and that they absolutely represent the wisdom that is desired in them. Allah رحمته recommended His servants to do this: “...as there are within yourselves. Can you not see?”²⁴⁴; and “Do they not ever reflect on camels – how they were masterfully created?...”²⁴⁵ In a similar fashion, if one properly contemplates and observes all of His upper and lower creations and everything in between, he will find it all to be designed and enveloped in great wisdom. He would be able to read the wisdom etched into them and proclaim: “This is the making of the Omniscient and the Wise, and it is the decree of the Almighty and the Omniscient. If minds can find anything more suitable than this, they should recommend it; if they see anything more beautiful than it, they should bring it forth and showcase it. That is the making of ‘the One Who created seven heavens, one above the other. You will never see any imperfection in the creation of the Most Compassionate. So look again: do you see any flaws?’”²⁴⁶ One who observes this world and contemplates it as it rightly should would

²⁴⁴ *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 21.

²⁴⁵ *Al-Ghāshiyah*, 17.

²⁴⁶ *Al-Mulk*, 3.

know that its Creator masterfully designed it and fortified it. When he ponders over it, he would find it to be like a house in which all its installations are prepared. The sky is raised like a roof, the Earth is stretched out like a carpet, the stars are clustered like lamps, and welfare is stored therein like treasures. Everything in it is designed for something it is suited for. Man is like the owner who was made entitled to it. The various types of flora have been prepared for his purposes. Different animals are utilised to his advantage. Some of them are only for milking, siring, and nourishment; some are only for riding and transportation; others are for beauty and adornment; and others are for all of these, such as camels – their stomachs are storage containers for drink, food, medicine, and cure. There is a lesson in them for those who want to observe and signs for those who are discerning. And within the avian species – with all of its variety, shapes, colours, population numbers, the advantages they afford, their songs, with their wings outspread and folded in, and with their migration and settlement patterns – there is a great lesson and clear indicator to the wisdom of the Creator, the Omniscient.²⁴⁷

Ibn Rushd رحمته الله excellently phrased this argument. He said,

As for the method the religion pursued in edifying the masses on the world being from the making of Allah ﷻ, note that when the verses carrying this meaning are contemplated, this method can be found to be one of providence. It is one way that we have stated is indicative of the existence of the Creator ﷻ. Furthermore, when a man looks at a perceptible item and finds it to be fashioned into a specific shape, size, and configuration, and that all of these are aligned to the benefit and end goal one would expect from it (such that he would have to admit that this benefit would not have been found if it was fashioned into any other shape, configuration, or quantity), he would be convinced that this thing has a maker who made it. This is why its shape, configuration, and size are aligned to its benefit. It is also why it would not be possible for all these things to have just coincidentally converged for that benefit. For example, when a person sees a stone on the ground, and he finds it to be shaped in a way that makes it fit to be sat on, and he likewise finds its configuration and size to be as such, he would know that this stone was fashioned into a chair by a maker who configured and shaped it in that place. As for when he does not see this sort of arrangement for sitting, he would be certain that the stone's appearance in this place and manner was

²⁴⁷ *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalah*, 4/1568.

coincidental, without any person having placed it there. The same is applicable to the entire world. Man can look therein and see the Sun, the Moon, and the stars – which are the cause of the four seasons, night and day, rain, water, wind, sections on Earth becoming inhabited with people and terrestrial animals being found therein – and that water is acclimatised for aquatic creatures, and the air made suitable for flying creatures. He can see that if any of these forms and structures are disturbed, the creations present here would all be disrupted. He would therefore be certain that it would not be possible that all segments of the world just coincidentally converged for the sake of man, animal, and flora; rather, that was by the design of someone who willed this. That would be Allah ﷻ. Man would also know with all conviction that the world was constructed, because he would instinctively know that it is impossible to find such convergence out of sheer coincidence without any maker. This type of evidence is decisive and simple, as is obvious from what we have written here. Its basis lies on two principles that everybody acknowledges. One is that the world, along with all its constituent parts, is aligned to the existence of man and all animals that live here. The second is that anything – along with all its constituent parts – that is aligned to a single act and a singular goal must be considered made. These two principles obviously result in this: The world is made, and it has a maker. The argument from providence denotes both of these points simultaneously. This is why it is the most esteemed of arguments for the existence of the Maker.’²⁴⁸

One of the most famed and widespread passages for this argument in the Western space is the fascinating analogy by William Paley in his book *Natural Theology*: ‘In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever; nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for anything I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone?’²⁴⁹

The answer is obvious. The complex composition a watch contains instinctively reveals the existence of its maker. Paley wanted to draw an analogy for the universe from the watch, which necessitates the existence of a watchmaker.

²⁴⁸ *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāhij al-Adillah*, p. 162.

²⁴⁹ *The Works of William Paley*, 4/1.

It is from here that this example has become famously known as the ‘watchmaker analogy’, as a metaphor for the world needing a Wise, Omniscient Maker.

Composition of the argument

The composition of this argument is similar to the composition of the argument from creation in that it also relies on: a) sensory and perceptible data, and b) innate and instinctive concepts. It is what gives the argument its strength. This argument is easy to comprehend and conceptualise – it has no difficulty to it.

For example, when a person looks at the Grand Canyon, which is the steep-sided canyon found in Arizona, and then he compares this to Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, where a colossal sculpture of four American presidents is carved into the granite face of the mountain, or other man-made sculptures and carvings, he would perceive that there is an obvious distinction to be made. Although it is understandable that the former was caused by wind and river erosion, he may not be able to believe the same are capable of the latter. Even though he would not have seen them being carved and sculptured in person, he would most certainly know that there were people who did this. If you contemplate on this point further and try to identify the reason for this distinction, it would simply be down to the nature of the composition and complexity of the structure that would make man-made design to be more plausible.

This explains why this argument is so widespread in its usage to prove the existence of Allah. Like its predecessor, it is one of the most used arguments in religious and philosophical circles, and it makes the creation the subject matter, where reasoning and rational concepts are applied to them. Whereas the argument from creation is leveraged to prove that there must be a creator for the creation, this argument leverages the finely-tuned nature of the creation, which suggests there is a Wise, Omniscient Creator. The first argument draws its reasoning from the actual moment of creation; this argument draws its reasoning *after* creation comes into existence. The latter also stands out insofar as it introduces further attributes of the Creator, such as His perfect power, will, knowledge, wisdom, and others.

Names for this argument

As this argument is used extensively, there have been various terms to describe it, though they all refer to the same meaning: argument from systemisation; argument from fine-tuning; argument from design (teleological argument); argument from providence; argument from purpose; and argument from planning.

Revelation pointing to this rational argument

Looking at revelation, one can find many usages of this argument as evidence to assist servants in revealing the greatness of the Lord ﷻ and His perfect knowledge, power, and wisdom. It stimulates man's innate predisposition, that invites him to ascribe these manifestations of masterful construction to a Wise and Willing Doer. Read, for example, the following statements of Allah ﷻ:

- 'To those who disbelieve in the Hereafter belong all evil qualities, whereas to Allah belong the finest attributes. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.'²⁵⁰
- 'It is Allah Who has raised the heavens without pillars – as you can see – then established Himself on the Throne. He has subjected the Sun and the Moon, each orbiting for an appointed term. He conducts the whole affair. He makes the signs clear so that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord.'²⁵¹

Though these verses are in the context of proving why the Lord ﷻ alone is worthy of worship – the proof being that the polytheists affirmed that He ﷻ is alone in absolute Lordship²⁵² – they also necessarily imply that Allah exists. The fact is that the verses that can be presented in this regard are too numerous to be all listed.²⁵³ They are the verses that instruct servants to animate their powers of contemplation to ponder over the creation of the heavens and the Earth, the alternation of day and night, and the care given to the stars, clouds, winds, and all natural phenomena that are indicative of their Creator's magnificence. This is in addition to those verses that speak of the wonders of Allah ﷻ in the animal and plant kingdoms. Man himself is not precluded from this process of contemplation – he is to observe and be the subject of observation at the same time. This is why Allah ﷻ said, 'There are countless signs on Earth for those with sure faith.'²⁵⁴

Thus, one of the decisively established points in revelation is about celebrating the act of worship. This is achieved by reflecting on Allah's creations, where one utilises the observation of them to believe in Allah ﷻ and His perfect attributes, and – as a result – to understand His worthiness of being the only worthy being for our servitude and worship.

²⁵⁰ *Al-Nahl*, 60.

²⁵¹ *Al-Ra'd*, 2.

²⁵² Translator's note: This is an argument most commonly supported by those following the tradition of the 18th century figure Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najdī. Other Muslim groups vehemently disagree with the notion that the Makkan polytheists acknowledged absolute lordship for Allah.

²⁵³ Dr. Su'ūd al-'Arīfī gathered all of this evidence and detailed how they are indicative of this point in his important work *al-Adillah al-'Aqliyyah al-Naqliyyah (The Rational Proofs of Scripture)*.

²⁵⁴ *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 20.

Sizing the impact of this argument

There is no doubt that this argument has had a huge impact in the debate surrounding this issue. Such has been its sway that it has forced many atheists to acknowledge its power; in fact, it has caused some of their most famous figures to abandon atheism altogether. British philosopher Antony Flew, a famous ex-atheist who had previously written a number of pro-atheism research papers and participated in numerous debates, ended up affirming the existence of a Wise, Omniscient Creator who made the universe. In his book *There is a God*, he expressed the deep impact this argument had on him personally, which led him to abandon atheism: ‘Although I was once sharply critical of the argument to design, I have since come to see that, when correctly formulated, this argument constitutes a persuasive case for the existence of God. Developments in two areas in particular have led me to this conclusion. The first is the question of the origin of the laws of nature and the related insights of eminent modern scientists. The second is the question of the origin of life and reproduction.’²⁵⁵ This argument has forced even the most ardent of atheists into admitting that it is one of the best polemics offered by theists.

Structure of the argument

The teleological argument is based on the following propositions:

- First proposition: The universe we see and live in is masterfully made and consummate. The signs of care and providence therein are apparent.
- Second proposition: This consummate mastery suggests that there is a Wise, Omniscient Doer who created it in this manner.
- Conclusion: Allah ﷻ is the Wise, Omniscient Creator who created the universe.

The argument can also be based on an elimination process: list all the possibilities first, then remove the implausible ones. The statement here is that the universe is masterfully made and consummate. The possibilities for this being the case are three:

- i. It appeared out of causal determinism.
- ii. It appeared out of coincidence.
- iii. It appeared thanks to a Wise and Willing Creator.

By dispelling the first two options (which is to be discussed in more detail soon), the only option remaining is the third.

²⁵⁵ *There is a God*, p. 95.

Proof for the first proposition: ‘The universe is masterfully and consummately made’

When a person thinks about the phenomenon of the mastery that exists in this universe and looks at its wonderful manifestations and imagery, he would see that this argument can be found abundantly across the world that we live in. The universe is laden with amazing scenes of beauty, grandeur, and mastery. The atheist physicist Steven Weinberg said, ‘I have to admit that sometimes nature seems more beautiful than strictly necessary.’²⁵⁶ Suffice it to say that, had this beauty and mastery not been in such abundance, we would have been in a totally different universe – and our world would have become a hard place to live.

This abundance of evidence for the masterful construction of the universe has had a huge influence in the teleological argument’s spread and the simplicity of its application. In fact, this abundance makes it suitable for a wide range of people, as people can differ vastly in terms of their ability to comprehend and contemplate the signs of intelligent design in the creation. This is also because people differ in terms of their cognitive experiences and knowledge. Whenever the intellectual tools inside a person are in greater abundance and maturity, he would gain a foresight into the subtlety of an immaculate construction that someone without these tools would not be able to acquire. The essence of this capability is found in all people so long as their *fiṭrah* and senses are uncorrupted. Beyond this, they can vary in terms of the extent they can exercise reflection – an act of worship – just as they can vary in terms of the impact that reflection can have on them.

In traditional writings, in the pursuit of understanding the Creator ﷻ and to deepen one’s knowledge of Him and His perfect attributes, there is a faith-based response that speaks to reflection. One of the best writings on this is what Imam Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله wrote in his books *Shifā’ al-‘Alīl* and *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*, where he extensively researched this issue in the search of Allah’s wisdom in many aspects of His creation, revealing His omniscience in the manifestation of masterful and consummate construction embedded in the creation. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī رحمه الله also has a treatise on the same issue, titled *al-Ḥikmah fī Makhlūqāt Allah*.

With the advancement in scientific knowledge, further manifestations of greatness, grandeur, and mastery in the creation of Allah ﷻ have opened up for us. This has left many minds astounded. Many contemporary scientific studies today have presented highly sophisticated tools of knowledge to us, underscoring the same meaning that we can ascertain when observing the manifestations of consummate construct in the universe – only in a more detailed and in-depth manner.

²⁵⁶ *Dreams of a Final Theory: The Search for the Fundamental Laws of Nature*, p. 250.

So that we are precise, what science can offer in this field is evidence for the propositions upon which the existence of Allah ﷻ can be rationally negotiated. Natural science, as per its current definition and the field in which it operates – cannot offer any direct evidence in this issue, because it seeks to reveal the material and natural causes to observable events. However, what it *can* provide are precludes upon which the desired evidence can be based. This uncovers what is one of the problematic areas in many atheist discourses, especially those that make science out to be the sole source of knowledge, thus shutting down the path of demonstrating evidence for Allah’s existence. This is because this would mean the sources of knowledge are restricted to material means alone. It casts a prison from which one cannot escape. A person may only be able to source knowledge of causes – and their causes – from inside this material prison, even if all the evidence suggests that the solution lies outside these prison walls. By the same logic, the efforts of atheists to demonstrate the non-existence of Allah are also from outside this material framework, as they are merely philosophical summaries based on that knowledge. This is why it is important to highlight the conflation that oftentimes occurs between scientific knowledge that is known to be correct on the one hand, and the philosophical theories that are based on science on the other. These theories, after distillation and analysis, might turn out to be correct after all, though they might be proven false as well.

Contemporary scientific concepts that are indicative of the teleological argument:

First concept: The fine-tuning of the universe

One scientific concept that can be leveraged to uncover the deeply consummate construct of the universe is known as the fine-tuning of the universe. This idea first surfaced in a paper written by the physicist Brandon Carter in 1974, which was titled ‘Large number coincidences and the anthropic principle in cosmology’. The next work to appear on this was by Bernard Carr and Martin Rees in 1979 called ‘The anthropic principle and the structure of the physical world’, followed by the classic encyclopaedic work *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* by John Barrow and Frank Tipler in 1986. Subsequently, many writings on this issue appeared, all of which carry the same premise.

The key premise is that when the universe is contemplated, we can see that there are standardised and extremely finely-tuned laws and constants in place for life to exist; in fact, some of these laws are so finely balanced that the existence of the entire universe rests upon it, and that any imbalance in any of these constants would lead to ultimate destruction. The level of mastery present in the making of the universe is not restricted only to biological living beings or this astonishing planet in which we live. This mastery extends to the laws and

constants that govern this universe. These constants are a set of numerical data that have been very carefully selected, such that if they would have fallen either side of those numbers to even a small extent, the entire system of life – and in fact the entire universe itself – would disappear. The very existence of the universe is linked to these crucial numbers.

Stephen C. Meyer, founder and director of the Discovery Institute, clarifies this with an example: ‘Imagine that you are a cosmic explorer who has just stumbled into the control room of the whole universe. There you discover an elaborate “universe-creating machine”, with rows and rows of dials, each with many possible settings. As you investigate, you learn that each dial represents some particular parameter that has to be calibrated with a precise value in order to create a universe in which life can exist. One dial represents the possible settings for the strong nuclear force, one for the gravitational constant, one for Planck’s constant, one for the ratio of the neutron mass to the proton mass, one for the strength of electromagnetic attraction, and so on. As you, the cosmic explorer, examine the dials, you find that they could easily have been tuned to different settings. Moreover, you determine by careful calculation that if any of the dial settings were even slightly altered, life would cease to exist. Yet for some reason each dial is set at just the exact value necessary to keep the universe running. What do you infer about the origin of these finely-tuned dial settings?’²⁵⁷

The logical conclusion, which we shall come onto, is that there is something that calibrated these dials so that those constants could gain and retain the values that are distinct to them and necessary for the existence of life and the universe.

There are a number of examples showcased in the universe that demonstrate fine-tuning. We can mention a few as examples.

Gravity

When we ponder over the Earth’s gravitational pull, its control over us, and how it pulls us back down to itself, we feel that there is a mighty force from which there is no escape. However, when compared to other natural forces, it appears to be very weak. In fact, it is 10^{36} times weaker than the strong nuclear force. The weakness of gravity compared to other natural forces is a key element in the extremely precise fine-tuning for life. In the *New Scientist* magazine, in the article titled ‘Gravity mysteries: Why is gravity fine-tuned?’, it states, ‘The feebleness of gravity is something we should be grateful for. If it were a tiny bit stronger, none of us would be here to scoff at its puny nature.’²⁵⁸

The gravitational constant of the universe has been incredibly and precisely tuned – had it been off even by 10^{60} , we would not have existed. To understand

²⁵⁷ *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, p. 57.

²⁵⁸ <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20227123-000-gravity-mysteries-why-is-gravity-fine-tuned/>

been 2% stronger, the hydrogen atoms would have bonded with each other so rapidly that they would have all become helium, which would have been the overwhelmingly predominant chemical element across the universe. There is a wonderful balance in this force: Some hydrogen atoms bond to become helium atoms, whereas the rest of the hydrogen remains to form all other chemical elements, such as bonding with oxygen to form water. It would be difficult to envisage any life without this perfect balance in this force.

What has been said for the strong nuclear force is equally applicable to the weak nuclear force, as well as the electromagnetic force. Along with gravity and the strong nuclear force, they represent the four forces that regulate the universe. All four are so finely balanced that if any of them were to change even in the slightest, life would not have been able to exist.

Examples that are indicative of fine-tuning are too numerous to mention. They can be studied and observed in the books that deal with this wondrous phenomenon. Some works that come to mind in this regard are *Just Six Numbers* by Martin Rees, *Big Bang, Big God: A Universe Fit for Life?* by Rodney Holder, *The Science of God: The Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom* by Gerald Schroeder, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* by Alister McGrath, *The Goldilocks Enigma* by Paul Davies, and *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* by Neil Manson. In fact, most Western writings that have researched this argument showcase a variety of examples to demonstrate the finely-tuned nature of the universe, its laws, and its constants.

What is wondrous about this state of being finely-tuned is that, had some of these forces not been where they exactly are, the universe would have long ceased to exist the way we know it. Some forces are balanced in a way that allowed the development of stars, planets, and matter. Other forces are so finely balanced that they were simply put in place to welcome mankind. The lattermost point is what is known as the anthropic principle. There is a set of data related to the nature of this universe that would have made it unsuitable for life had it been any different. The British philosopher Antony Flew skilfully painted an image of this argument in his book *There is a God*:

Imagine entering a hotel room on your next vacation. The CD player on the bedside table is softly playing a track from your favorite recording. The framed print over the bed is identical to the image that hangs over the fireplace at home. The room is scented with your favorite fragrance. You shake your head in amazement and drop your bags on the floor. You're suddenly very alert. You step over to the minibar, open the door, and stare in wonder at the contents. Your favorite beverages. Your favorite cookies and candy. Even the brand of bottled water you prefer. You turn from the minibar, then, and

gaze around the room. You notice the book on the desk: it's the latest volume by your favorite author. You glance into the bathroom, where personal care and grooming products are lined up on the counter, each one as if it was chosen specifically for you. You switch on the television; it is tuned to your favorite channel. Chances are, with each new discovery about your hospitable new environment, you would be less inclined to think it was all a mere coincidence, right? You might wonder how the hotel managers acquired such detailed information about you. You might marvel at their meticulous preparation. You might even double-check what all this is going to cost you. But you would certainly be inclined to believe that someone knew you were coming.'²⁶⁰

He adds,

That vacation scenario is a clumsy, limited parallel to the so-called fine-tuning argument. The recent popularity of this argument has highlighted a new dimension of the laws of nature. "The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture", writes physicist Freeman Dyson, "the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense knew we were coming." In other words, the laws of nature seem to have been crafted so as to move the universe toward the emergence and sustenance of life. This is the anthropic principle, popularized by such thinkers as Martin Rees, John Barrow, and John Leslie.²⁶¹

When Ibn Rushd coined the argument from providence in his book *al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah*, he pointed out the care a man receives:

The method the Glorious Book pointed out and invited all to its gate is this: When a comprehensive assessment of the Great Book is conducted, this method of argument can be found to be designated as two types. One is the method of providence vis-à-vis man and the creation of all things in existence for his sake. Let us name this the argument from providence. The second method is the design of the essences inside existing things, such as the fashioning of life in an otherwise inanimate object, and one's sensory and rational perceptions. Let us name this the argument from design. As for the first method, it is based on two principles. One is that all things in existence here are aligned to the interests of the existence of man. The second principle is that this alignment is by way of necessity from a willing doer who willed this, as it is not possible that this

²⁶⁰ *There is a God*, p. 113.

²⁶¹ *There is a God*, p. 114.

alignment occurred by chance. As for their alignment to the interests of the existence of man, one can be certain of that thanks to how night, day, the Sun, and the Moon are in line with his interests; the same applies to the alignment of the four seasons, and the place he is in – Earth. This arrangement also includes many animals, plants, inanimate objects, and the other many elements such as the rains, the rivers, and the entire set of Earth, water, fire, and wind. Providence also manifests in the limbs of humans and animals, meaning they are all arranged for man’s life and existence. In all, it is understood that the benefits offered by everything in existence fall under this type. This is why it is incumbent upon one who wants to fully understand Allah ﷻ to look at the benefits offered by all things in existence.’²⁶²

In addition to the organised nature of the universe and all of its laws and constants that Allah placed therein, it is even more wondrous that this universe is an object of education and understanding. This is not a light point; it could have so easily been decreed not to be so. So what was the reason for the universe being not only organised and an entity to be studied, but also able to express its laws and regulations in mathematical terms to a very high degree of precision? Einstein quipped, ‘The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is at all comprehensible.’ Our existence in this world is at a fixed place and a fixed moment in time. With highly specific, precise, and finely-tuned measurements about the world that we now know of, the space for us to decipher the universe has now really opened up. This would not have been possible without these cosmological measurements in front of us.

In the introduction to the book *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery* by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, it reads:

The fact that our atmosphere is clear; that our Moon is just the right size and distance from Earth, and that its gravity stabilizes Earth’s rotation; that our position in our galaxy is just so; that our Sun is its precise mass and composition – all of these facts and many more not only are necessary for Earth’s habitability but also have been surprisingly crucial to the discovery and measurement of the universe by scientists. Mankind is unusually well positioned to decipher the cosmos. Were we merely lucky in this regard?²⁶³

This degree of mastery and fine-tuning brings about a set of questions: How were these constants, states, and data points found? Is there someone or something

²⁶² *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāhij al-Adillah* fī ‘Aqā’id al-Millah, p. 118.

²⁶³ *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery*, p. x.

that brought them all together in this precise fashion? Was it always meant to be this way? Or did the universe simply come about as an accident?

Was the universe determined and always supposed to be like this?

As for the atheist viewpoint that the universe was – supposedly – always going to come to a point where it is now at, then that is not necessarily the case. This is the stance that most physicists adopt, such as Stephen Hawking, Paul Davies, George Ellis, and others. For example, Davies states, ‘A genuine theory of everything must explain not only how our universe came into being, but also why it is the only type of universe that there could have been – why there could only be one set of physical laws.’²⁶⁴

The determinist position claiming that these constants were bound to appear leads to the position that it would be impossible for any universe to come into existence in which there is no life, and that the existence of the universe in this narrowly suitable manner was determined and always bound to happen. This goes against reality: All the data suggest that the probability of a universe – like ours – that would support life is extremely minuscule compared to the infinite probabilities of lifeless universes. There is not even a whiff of evidence that would suggest that these constants must always come about in this manner.

Indeed, some scientists speak of a theory that has not been discovered until now. It is called the ‘theory of everything’ (TOE). It attempts to offer a theory that organises the four forces of nature into one law, which will hugely simplify a lot of aspects in physics. The search for this theory had already begun with Einstein, who said, ‘What really interests me is whether God could have created the world any differently.’ Of course, his efforts in this regard did not come to any fruition. The ‘string theory’ is a continuation of the attempt to find TOE. The most famous attempt today – which is at the forefront of these discussions and is the lead theory – is what is known as the ‘M-theory’, which attempts to unify all consistent versions of string theory under one rule. Such assumptions are the go-to default of some people who want to explain why the universe’s laws and constants are as they are. Victor Stenger says, ‘Many physicists expect that ultimately a theory of everything (TOE) will be discovered that will include a calculation of all its parameters. In that case, there will be nothing to fine-tune.’²⁶⁵ Therefore, would the demonstrable existence of something like the M-theory lead to the accuracy of the deterministic view of the universe, leading to the denial of the existence of Allah ﷻ? It does not seem so – for two reasons.

Firstly, let us assume that these types of cosmological constants are governed by a law whose values – in light of that law – can only be in accordance with the

²⁶⁴ *The Mind of God*, p. 161.

²⁶⁵ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning: Why the Universe Is Not Designed for Us*, p. 234.

existing data. Would such a law in itself be deterministic and envisaged only as such? Or would it be possible for it to assume different scenarios and variations that result in different values for the cosmological constants? If that is the case, the question would switch from one of ‘Why are the constants like this?’ to ‘Out of all the probable versions, why is it only this version of absolute law?’ Therefore, the process of seeking out an absolute and universal rule that would govern all theories would no longer have any impact in the debate over the existence of Allah ﷻ, because Allah Himself would have been the author of this first rule, and He would have been the One Who delineated those values and numbers that made the universe suitable for life.

Secondly, imagine a man adopted a more vigorous stance and claimed that this law can only be in the manner it is, in the sense that it cannot ever be envisaged that there are other different versions of it in any other possible universe. If we assume the existence of other universes, they would all be copies of our universe, because this absolute law would be governing all universes; therefore, this law in itself would be deterministic, as well as the laws of physics that are born out of the law. However, it would appear that this choice too is unacceptable. It raises further questions of a profoundly deep nature. In fact, it is based on preconceived notions that cannot be scientifically proven. In reality, it is just a claim in metaphysics that contradicts the scientism methodology.

One legitimate scientific question that may be put forward here – which is also a conundrum for someone who adopts this conceptualisation – is this: What is the meaning of a single absolute law (which can only be according to this method) being the one from which the manifestations of precision and fine-tuning in our universe are born out of? What is the interpretation of an unchangeable deterministic law being the one in whose light the constants that make the universe suitable for life are formed? Such a conceptualisation would make our very existence deterministic, which should be incredibly perplexing to anyone who adopts this view.

Peter van Inwagen offers an example that reveals the problem – a mystery – associated with the view, which mandates that it be revisited for greater scrutiny and understanding: Imagine you have a large piece of paper. You draw a table with a thousand rows and a thousand columns. Starting from the top, you write every number in the π sequence (3.14159265369...) in order, until every cell has a number inside it. Then you assign a specific colour to each single digit and colour all the cells alongside that digit with the same colour. Imagine you then take a step back and look at the paper – it turns out to be a high quality drawing, something like the Mona Lisa painting. Would this not be astonishing and strange? However, you then remember that this was *meant to be*, i.e., that this image would appear if the π sequence was written in this manner. In spite of this, could it be possible that we accept this to be sheer coincidence by way of legal

determinism? It would seem that this line of thought is not acceptable, or that this would be a rational explanation.

In their classic pioneering paper, ‘The anthropic principle and the structure of the physical world’, Bernard Carr and Martin Rees said, ‘However, even if all apparently anthropic coincidences²⁶⁶ could be explained in this way, it would still be remarkable that the relationships dictated by physical theory happened also to be those propitious for life.’²⁶⁷

After mentioning the point of view of those ‘hard-nosed physicists’ who believe in the determinism of these constants in this manner gripped by TOE, Richard Dawkins said, ‘Other physicists (Martin Rees himself would be an example) find this unsatisfying, and I think I agree with them. It is indeed perfectly plausible that there is only one way for a universe to be. But why did that one way have to be such a set-up for our eventual evolution? Why did it have to be the kind of universe which seems almost as if, in the words of the theoretical physicist Freeman Dyson, it “must have known we were coming”?’²⁶⁸

Furthermore, entertaining this sort of idea leads to the shutdown of scientific research under the excuse of ‘This is just how things are’, leaving no room to conduct any further investigation. Remember that atheists frequently lament theists for closing the doors to scientific progress²⁶⁹ as they consider the existence of Allah to be an explanation for natural phenomena. Therefore, this sort of idea assumes we will do the same: that when we crack this law, we will be able to explain every natural phenomenon in the universe with a single universal rule. The law itself will never be subject to investigation, under the pretence that it is deterministic and is not something one can escape from. Even if he sees the Mona Lisa like in the example above, he will claim that the absolute rule of the universe is the judge, and that is enough.

Note that the entire issue here is based on the problem that was dealt with earlier on. We proved that atheists do indeed have faith in an unseen future that science shall later on reveal. We referred to this as the ‘knowledge of the gaps’ or the ‘atheism of the gaps’. This position of theirs is a hopelessly idealistic viewpoint.

There was a lengthy discussion between Richard Dawkins and the atheist Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg. Dawkins discussed his answers to the argument from fine-tuning, and that it can be answered in one of three ways: 1)

²⁶⁶ i.e., all the data that is in relation to the issue of how the universe is suitable for man.

²⁶⁷ The anthropic principle and the structure of the physical world.

²⁶⁸ *The God Delusion*, p. 144.

²⁶⁹ On almost every occasion, atheists conflate the notion that Allah ﷻ is the ultimate cause to Whom all phenomena go back, and the notion that Allah ﷻ created a systemised set of laws for the universe. In the Islamic view, there is no contradiction between Allah, for example, sending down rain and the natural phenomenon that is the water cycle.

God is the one who set up these constants in this way – a proposal he obviously rejected; 2) leveraging the theory of the multiverse to explain this phenomenon; and 3) what he ascribed to Weinberg, that we do not have enough information to offer an answer to this, and that we should wait for future discoveries that will enable us to reach the TOE, which will ultimately reveal the answer. In light of that discussion, Dawkins admitted he had misunderstood Weinberg's position. Weinberg noted: 'But I don't think one should underestimate the fix we're in, that in the end we will not be able to explain the world, that we will have some set of laws of nature we will not be able to derive on the ground simply of mathematical consistency, because we can already think of mathematically consistent laws that don't describe the world as we know it, and we will always be left with a question why are the laws of nature what they are rather than some other laws and I don't see any way out of that.'²⁷⁰

Is it possible that the universe is sheer coincidence?

We leave the answer to this to Weinberg:

I mean it's not only a speculation. The theory would be speculative, but we don't have a theory in which that speculation is mathematically realized, yeah. But it's a possibility. But the only other explanation is that is not even an explanation because we don't have a candidate theory. But the only explanation that seems to work is that this is just one of those things that varies from sub-universe to sub-universe, from Big Bang to Big Bang. In most of the Big Bangs, it's much larger than what we observe. And in those Big Bangs, they go through because this energy drives the expansion of the universe depending on whether it's positive or negative. In the universe that blows up so rapidly, there's no time for galaxies or stars to form, or it crunches or re-collapses so rapidly again there's no time after life to form, yes. So it has to be small for life to exist, and it's about as small as it is in fact that's interesting it's not much smaller than it would have to be to allow life to arise...and it must be at least 10^{56} , or if you think you have some idea about fluctuations in even shorter distances I think you would say at least 10^{120} . In fact, that's a little disturbing.²⁷¹

Alexander Vilenkin says,

A tiny deviation from the required power results in a cosmological disaster, such as the fireball collapsing under its own weight or the universe being nearly empty...This is the most notorious and

²⁷⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2IisaNC4bE>

²⁷¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNpiX8XQhJM>

perplexing case of fine-tuning in physics. String theorist Leonard Susskind, a non-religious scientist, as is Vilenkin, writes in his article, *Disturbing Implications of the Cosmological Constant*, that unless this constant was fine-tuned, “statistically miraculous events” would be needed for our universe to be life-permitting. He suggests that, in light of this, it is possible that an unknown agent set the early conditions of the universe we observe today.²⁷²

The British physicist and mathematician Roger Penrose went further:

[He] calculated that the odds of our universe having such low disorder at the beginning of time are 1 in $10^{10^{123}}$ power (one followed by a million billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion zeroes). This number is so large that if you wrote out all the zeroes it would stretch across the galaxy. You’re more likely to win 10,000 lotteries in a row – and get struck by lightning every time you won – than you ever finding a universe with low disorder at its inception. Atheist John Loftus agreed with the reality of fine-tuning. Citing the work of other physicists, he writes, “These examples can be multiplied, but the point is that ‘with a change in any one of a number of factors’, the ‘universe would have evolved as a lifeless, unconscious entity.’” Don Page of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, calculated the odds against the formulation of our universe. His exact computation was 10,000,000,000 to the 124th power, a number so large that to call it “astronomical” would be to engage in a wild understatement.²⁷³

Paul Davies, a theoretical physicist, says, ‘The really amazing thing is not that life on Earth is balanced on a knife-edge, but that the entire universe is balanced on a knife-edge, and would be total chaos if any of the natural “constants” were off even slightly. You see, even if you dismiss man as a chance happening, the fact remains that the universe seems unreasonably suited to the existence of life – almost contrived – you might say a “put-up job”.’²⁷⁴ He adds: ‘The cliché that “life is balanced on a knife-edge” is a staggering understatement in this case: no knife in the universe could have an edge *that fine*.’²⁷⁵

Just to paint a picture of how impossible any coincidental balancing by the aforementioned ‘knife-edge’ would be, imagine you throw a banana onto a very thin piece of thread stretched out in the air and the banana lands on it perfectly and balances. Afterwards you throw a spoon onto the banana and it balances vertically. Then you place an egg on top of that and it still balances vertically.

²⁷² *Answering Atheism*, p. 153.

²⁷³ *Answering Atheism*, p. 154.

²⁷⁴ http://geraldschroeder.com/wordpress/?page_id=49

²⁷⁵ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 170.

Subsequently, you place a pen and it remains all in vertical balance, and on top of the pen goes a pin and it balances vertically, and so on. It is that impossible.

Scientists offer many other examples to demonstrate the improbability of these sorts of numbers converging out of coincidence. For example, clarifying the impossibility of the most primitive of cells coming into existence by way of chaos and coincidence, Fred Hoyle said, ‘A junkyard contains all the bits and pieces of a Boeing 747, dismembered and in disarray. A whirlwind happens to blow through the yard. What is the chance that after its passage a fully assembled 747, ready to fly, will be found standing there? So small as to be negligible, even if a tornado were to blow through enough junkyards to fill the whole Universe.’²⁷⁶

Astrophysicist Michael Turner said it would be like shooting an arrow from the edge of the universe to hit a target at the other end, with a margin of error of one millimetre.²⁷⁷ Astrophysicist Hugh Ross said that if we filled America with metal currency until the mound reaches the Moon, which is 380,000 kilometres from Earth, repeated the process for a billion other continents, coloured one metal piece in red and buried it under one of these mounds, and then we sent in a blindfolded man and asked him to pick out that red piece, the probabilities of him picking out that red piece is one in 10^{40} .²⁷⁸ Compare this figure with the aforementioned numbers to understand how improbable this would be as a coincidence. In fact, even expressing how remote a possibility it is would not begin to convey its implausibility.

Antony Flew said,

The last of my public debates, a symposium at New York University, occurred in May 2004. The other participants were the Israeli scientist Gerald Schroeder, author of best sellers on science and religion, notably *The Science of God*, and the Scottish philosopher John Haldane, whose *Theism and Atheism* was a debate on God’s existence with my friend Jack Smart. To the surprise of all concerned, I announced at the start that I now accepted the existence of a God. What might have been an intense exchange of opposing views ended up as a joint exploration of the developments in modern science that seemed to point to a higher intelligence. In the video of the symposium, the announcer suggested that of all the great discoveries of modern science, the greatest was God. In this symposium, when asked if recent work on the origin of life pointed to the activity of a creative intelligence, I said: “Yes, I now think it does...almost entirely because of the DNA investigations. What I

²⁷⁶ Fred Hoyle. *Intelligent Universe: A New View of Creation and Evolution*, p. 19.

²⁷⁷ Gerald Schroeder. *The Science of God the Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom by Gerald Schroeder*, p. 5.

²⁷⁸ Anthony Walsh. *Answering the New Atheists*, p. 163.

think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together. It's the enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence." This statement represented a major change of course for me, but it was nevertheless consistent with the principle I have embraced since the beginning of my philosophical life – of following the argument no matter where it leads. I was particularly impressed with Gerry Schroeder's point-by-point refutation of what I call the "monkey theorem." This idea, which has been presented in a number of forms and variations, defends the possibility of life arising by chance using the analogy of a multitude of monkeys banging away on computer keyboards and eventually ending up writing a Shakespearean sonnet. Schroeder first referred to an experiment conducted by the British National Council of Arts. A computer was placed in a cage with six monkeys. After one month of hammering away at it (as well as using it as a bathroom!), the monkeys produced fifty typed pages – but not a single word. Schroeder noted that this was the case even though the shortest word in the English language is one letter (*a* or *I*). A is a word only if there is a space on either side of it. If we take it that the keyboard has thirty characters (the twenty-six letters and other symbols), then the likelihood of getting a one-letter word is 30 times 30, which is 27,000. The likelihood of getting a one-letter word is one chance out of 27,000. Schroeder then applied the probabilities to the sonnet analogy. "What's the chance of getting a Shakespearean sonnet?" he asked. He continued: "All the sonnets are the same length. They're by definition fourteen lines long. I picked the one I knew the opening line for, 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' I counted the number of letters; there are 488 letters in that sonnet. What's the likelihood of hammering away and getting 488 letters in the exact sequence as in 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?'" What you end up with is 26 multiplied by itself 488 times – or 26 to the 488th power. Or, in other words, in base 10, 10 to the 690th. [Now] the number of particles in the universe – not grains of sand, I'm talking about protons, electrons, and neutrons – is 10 to the 80th. Ten to the 80th is 1 with 80 zeros after it. Ten to the 690th is 1 with 690 zeros after it. There are not enough particles in

the universe to write down the trials; you'd be off by a factor of 10 to the 600th. If you took the entire universe and converted it to computer chips – forget the monkeys – each one weighing a millionth of a gram and had each computer chip able to spin out 488 trials at, say, a million times a second; if you turn the entire universe into these microcomputer chips and these chips were spinning a million times a second [producing] random letters, the number of trials you would get since the beginning of time would be 10 to the 90th trials. It would be off again by a factor of 10 to the 600th. You will never get a sonnet by chance. The universe would have to be 10 to the 600th times larger. Yet the world just thinks the monkeys can do it every time.” After hearing Schroeder’s presentation, I told him that he had very satisfactorily and decisively established that the “monkey theorem” was a load of rubbish, and that it was particularly good to do it with just a sonnet; the theorem is sometimes proposed using the works of Shakespeare or a single play, such as Hamlet. If the theorem won’t work for a single sonnet, then of course it’s simply absurd to suggest that the more elaborate feat of the origin of life could have been achieved by chance.’²⁷⁹

Gerald Schroeder has a humorous example to demonstrate why the theory of coincidence to explain the natural phenomena is implausible. A man goes to the gambling capital of the world, Las Vegas, and enters a casino. He sits at a slot machine. He inserts a coin and pulls his arm away and the wheels start spinning. He hits the jackpot. He would most certainly be over the Moon, and those around him would probably be happy for him as well, and would congratulate him. Now, imagine this person felt it was his lucky day. He inserted a coin and hit the jackpot again. His joy would be indescribable. Now, pretend the same happened on the third, fourth, and fifth occasions: every time he is winning big, not just any small prize. It would be inevitable that after a few turns, his joy would turn into doubt. He would start thinking this is not possible, and that maybe there is something wrong with the machine, or that someone determined that he should win on every turn. Schroeder says,

With the universe we did not win just one lottery. We won at the choice for the strength of the electromagnetic force (which encourages atoms to join into molecules). We won at the strength of the strong nuclear force (which holds atomic nuclei together; were it a bit stronger the diproton and not hydrogen would be the major component of the universe, and no hydrogen means no shining stars). Other winning lotteries were the strength of the weak nuclear force and the strength of gravity (which dominates the universe at distances

²⁷⁹ *There is a God*, p. 75.

greater than the size of molecules and clusters mass into galaxies, stars, and planets), the mass and energy of the big bang, the temperature of the big bang, the rate of expansion of the universe, and much more. Lottery upon lottery, and all winners. They have meshed to produce the wonderful world in which we live. By chance? Not if our understanding of the laws of nature is even approximately correct. To this observer of nature, our universe looks like a put-up job.²⁸⁰

The American mathematician William Dembski attempted to make an equation for improbable things, called the universal probability bound. The question he was attempting to solve was this: To what point can the degree of improbability stoop down to, below which a specified event of that level of improbability cannot reasonably be attributed to chance, regardless of whatever probabilistic resources from the known universe are factored in? In other words, at what point does an improbable occurrence no longer remain within the bounds of probability/improbability, but must be explained through the will of a willing power that chose for it to occur this way? Dembski deduced an extremely high-value equation, by which it can be determined that something could not have occurred by coincidence. His proposal was one out of 10^{150} .

How did he come up with this massive number? He used the following data:

- The number of elementary particles that scientists have estimated is 10^{80} .
- In order for matter to transform from one state to another, it cannot occur in less than plank time, which is an extremely meagre amount of time that makes an eye blink feel like ages in comparison. Plank time is estimated to be at 10^{45} . By this estimate, it is possible that matter can transform in just 10^{45} of a second.
- The universe is approximately 14 billion years old, which means it is younger than 10^{25} seconds by millions of years.
- Based on this, for any physical event to occur in the universe would require at least a single particle to transform, which would be as long as the plank time. Let us assume that we want to ensure there is enough time for this event to happen out of coincidence – let us say that the age of the universe (or longer) is the timeframe for this to occur. This event would repeat itself 10^{45} times within one second. This would repeat itself over a period of time that is 10^{25} seconds, longer than the age of the universe itself. Therefore, $10^{80} \times 10^{45} \times 10^{25} = 10^{150}$.

²⁸⁰ *The Science of God: The Convergence Of Scientific And Biblical Wisdom*, p. 27.

This means that any coincidental physical event that has the probability of less than one in 10^{150} must be impossible, even if we exhaust every last particle – and second – in this cosmos for this event to occur. Obviously, these numbers are huge compared to the actual numbers we feel would tell us that something must have occurred by design and not by accident.²⁸¹ However, what are we to do with those who grant implausible possibility to coincidence? This is precisely one of the greatest problematic areas for atheists.

A number of atheists have great faith in the supposedly high probability of an accident being the cause of fine-tuning. I believe this represents one of the key differences between theists and atheists. Although some believers might believe that some things may occur out of coincidence, their faith in the capabilities of accidents would still be highly confined to one-off events. This is even assuming they have the same definition of coincidence. Atheists, on the other hand, have a great faith in the probability of coincidence triggering creation. This comes across quite conspicuously in atheist dogmatic writings – rhetoric like: ‘How did the universe come about? By accident. How did life start? By accident. How did the laws and regulations of the universe become so finely-tuned? By accident’, and so on. For example, when Dawkins speaks about the principle of life, conscience, and understanding, he puts all of these down to accident. When Daniel Dennett wanted to explain the principle of conscience and understanding, he said, ‘...and then the miracle happens.’²⁸²

In fact, their belief in the powers of coincidence go well beyond that. Reflect on this example of Dawkins’s faith in the powers of coincidence in deed and act, which makes answering any question on the complexities of life and the universe look easy, and renders coincidence a plausible answer every time. In his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, he says,

A miracle is something that happens, but which is exceedingly surprising. If a marble statue of the Virgin Mary suddenly waved its hand at us we should treat it as a miracle, because all our experience and knowledge tells us that marble doesn’t behave like that. I have just uttered the words “May I be struck by lightning this minute”. If lightning did strike me in the same minute, it would be treated as a miracle. But actually neither of these two occurrences would be classified by science as utterly impossible. They would simply be judged very improbable, the waving statue much more improbable than the lightning. Lightning does strike people. Any one of us might

²⁸¹ *Intelligent Design Uncensored*, p. 76.

²⁸² *There is a God*, p. xvii.

be struck by lightning, but the probability is pretty low in any one minute...²⁸³

Dawkins goes on to clarify his stance on the first example:

In the case of the marble statue, molecules in solid marble are continuously jostling against one another in random directions. The jostlings of the different molecules cancel one another out, so the whole hand of the statue stays still. But if, by sheer coincidence, all the molecules just happened to move in the same direction at the same moment, the hand would move. If they then all reversed direction at the same moment the hand would move back. In this way it is possible for a marble statue to wave at us. It could happen. The odds against such a coincidence are unimaginably great but they are not incalculably great. A physicist colleague has kindly calculated them for me. The number is so large that the entire age of the universe so far is too short a time to write out all the noughts! It is theoretically possible for a cow to jump over the Moon with something like the same improbability. The conclusion to this part of the argument is that we can calculate our way into regions of miraculous improbability far greater than we can imagine as plausible.²⁸⁴

He repeated the same example and discourse in his later book *The God Delusion*.²⁸⁵ Such words reveal the deep belief they have in things occurring by coincidence, and that it is possible for anything to occur spontaneously. Even the indescribably remotest of possibilities allows Dawkins to claim something is not miraculous or impossible; instead, he claims it is still possible so long as the data allow it to remain as such. When a person has this attitude and accepts it under the pretence that it is possible – even if its plausibility is highly unlikely – he would be prepared to accept anything. This is why Norman Geisler and Frank Turek use the apt description to title their book, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*.

In a letter to *The Economist* international newspaper magazine, one reader symbolically used the same idea in a somewhat sarcastic letter he penned in response to a pro-evolution article that was published by the weekly periodical: ‘I am amazed at your faith in evolution (“The story of man”, December 24th [2005]). It far outweighs my faith in creation. My faith requires only one mechanism: God's love. Yours requires three: that something can come of nothing (the “Big Bang”), that rocks can spontaneously spawn living things (life from inorganic

²⁸³ *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 159.

²⁸⁴ *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 159.

²⁸⁵ *The God Delusion*, p. 373.

elements) and that genetic mutations can turn a flatworm into an Einstein. You win; there is no doubt that your faith far outweighs mine.’²⁸⁶

If we add this to the sceptical attitude that atheists have with basic rational concepts (as discussed earlier), what would then be the state of human cognition? Rational concepts would be doubted. Our experiences through analysing this universe would also be questioned. The scientific and intellectual scene would be extremely gloomy if that were the case. Thankfully, nobody ever applies such scepticism in any consistent way – this should be sufficient to highlight its deep flaw.

Second concept: Irreducible complexity

One piece of jargon coined by the biochemist Dr. Michael Behe at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania is ‘irreducible complexity’. He wrote this in his famous book *Darwin’s Black Box*, in a chapter titled after it. Irreducible complexity is the idea that complex composite phenomena that require component parts that work in mutual harmony must have been made as thus in one go; if any lagged behind in evolution, the entire system of such phenomena would have collapsed. This proves that there must have been a designer who fashioned these phenomena in one go. So that any biological system can function properly, it must have three elements to it:

1. All its constituent parts must be present.
2. All its constituent parts must be present simultaneously.
3. All its constituent parts must bond with one another in a precise and harmonious manner.

The position purporting the universe to be an accident is on a very bumpy road before it could ever acquire these three conditions. This automatically should mean that there was a designer who fashioned these phenomena in the organised and precise manner that it did, and that they did not evolve through what atheists say are the blind laws of nature, random genetic mutations, or natural selection processes from primitive forms until they became the complex entities that they are. Such a position lends itself to reductionism and oversimplification, which contradicts the evolution theory that assumes that any complex biological system would have progressively evolved from simpler and simpler forms, going all the way back to its very first and simplest form. If phenomena lent themselves to such an oversimplification, it would automatically mean that they were all made in one go.

Given this, the designer position is the more rational answer to the question of how we came into existence. In his book, Behe mentioned a number of

²⁸⁶ <https://www.economist.com/letters/2006/01/19/on-devan-nair-american-poverty-the-death-penalty-evolution-deutsche-bank-gay-marriage>

examples from the natural world for these phenomena. The most famous and most iconic example of irreducible complexity is bacterial flagellum. This bacterium has a molecular motor that spins around, which allows it to move around in liquid with great ease. Its tail is made up of 40 different protein parts – if any one of those was not present at any given time, the bacteria would have been rendered non-functional. This demonstrates that it is an irreducibly complex organism that could not have gone through evolution, but rather came into nature in one go. Systems like the bacterial flagellum would be most easily and rationally explained by having come into existence through the willing and choosing doer that designed them as such, not that they gradually evolved by way of natural selection or slow genetic mutation as per the basic Darwin model.

This is just one example. There are many other examples. ‘For example, in 1998 the leading journal, *Cell*, featured a special issue on “Macromolecular Machines”. Molecular machines are incredibly complex devices that all cells use to process information, build proteins, and move materials back and forth across their membranes. Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, introduced this issue with an article entitled, “*The Cell as a Collection of Protein Machines*”. In it, he stated that: ‘We have always underestimated cells...The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines...Why do we call the large protein assemblies that underlie cell function protein machines? Precisely because, like machines invented by humans to deal efficiently with the macroscopic world, these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts.’²⁸⁷ The cell is a world unto its own, brimming with systems and various mechanisms. Each has been made in a specific way and carries out its own task. *In toto*, these systems and mechanisms play a role in the life of this cell.

One concept that is close to the notion of irreducible complexity developed by Behe is specified complexity, proposed by William Dembski, a philosopher and mathematician. Specified complexity is a method of reasoning for the argument from design for the existence of a designer. It denotes that wherever in nature any specified complexity is found, it would then be impossible for it to have come about as an accident. Rather, there must be someone who specified it to be in its composite and complex manner. Dembski says, ‘A single letter of the alphabet is specified without being complex. A long sentence of random letters is complex without being specified. A Shakespearean sonnet is both complex and specified.’²⁸⁸

Here are three letter sequences:

²⁸⁷ *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, p. 67.

²⁸⁸ *Intelligent Design*, p. 47.

into particular shapes, in order to store and disseminate the list of genetic instructions for making proteins and other enzymes for cells to remain alive.

In 1955, Crick theorised that the chemical components in DNA work similar to the letters of a language in constructing sentences, or how code operates in creating computer programmes. In other words, just like how computer programmes are put together to undertake specific tasks, likewise this sequence is put together in the nucleotides to perform specific duties, referred to as programmed sequencing. Significantly, Dawkins admitted: ‘The machine code of the genes is uncannily computerlike. Apart from differences in jargon, the pages of a molecular-biology journal might be interchanged with those of a computer-engineering journal.’²⁹⁰ This was echoed by Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft: ‘Human DNA is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software ever created.’²⁹¹

Programme codes are based on the specific sequencing of the 0 and 1 digits that suffice to store data and play computer applications. And as Arabic with all its 29 letters is sufficient to compose sentences and convey meanings, DNA relies on a type of subtle series of the four nucleotides, or ACGT. These four bases, or four letters, are responsible for storing and transporting genetic information that deals with the presence and construction of special proteins. Based on this, programmed sequencing comprises not only of great complexity but also specific duty assignments. This leads to a greater question: How did this specified programmed sequencing come about? In other words, from where did this astonishing level of information come?

This is a hugely important question. It exposes the great problem facing materialistic ideologies in their quest to answer the ‘How did life come about?’ question. It seems that materialists would arrive at a wrong outcome, because – simply put – they are looking for the answer in the wrong place. Ever since the late 1920s, those scientists believed that it is possible to explain the first moments of life in accordance with processes that are not directed by chemical evolution. In the book *The Origin of Life*, that was published in 1938, Alexander Oparin presented an early theory of chemical evolution that comprised of the appearance of life through gradual changes that began with simple chemical solutions of organic matter during the early phases of Earth. Whereas Darwinism dealt with the interpretation of the root of this variety across living organisms and how multitudes of complex types evolved from simple forms, chemical evolution deals with the emergence of life and the first cells, or in more precise terms, the first chemical composite that was able to replicate itself.

²⁹⁰ *River Out of Eden*, p. 17.

²⁹¹ *The Road Ahead*, p. 228.

that aligns with the human *fitrah* is what led Francis Crick to offer a vision that would explain this phenomenon, or ‘miracle’ as he put it. He said in his book *Life Itself* that it is possible that a civilisation more advanced than us from space planted the first seed of life on Earth, and that it was responsible for the first programme in living beings.

But the fact is that Crick did not actually answer the question; rather, he merely kicked the can down the road for someone else to answer it. How were those space civilisations found, if ever? Who were they anyway? Furthermore, Crick referred to space. With the assertions made by science that led him to this answer, he muddled the possibility of it being correct by opening it up the possibility of being falsified. It is clear that the motivator for such an answer is to maintain atheism as a viable ideology. The signs for what he observed are clearly indicative of a Wise and Omniscient Creator, but he was unable to acknowledge Him. Instead, he clinged onto his materialistic outlook on existence and the universe, and ascribed the whole thing to a higher species.

In his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Michael Denton noted: ‘Crick has also recently conceded that life may after all be very improbable and has turned to an interesting variation on the saltational alternative, the idea that life was originally seeded on Earth from space – the idea of panspermia.’²⁹⁴

The aspect of information signatures is not confined to the aforementioned framework. Rather, it is present in all of existence. Matter and energy alone do not explain the systems, mechanisms, and living orders that are in existence. Information represents a pivotal part in the emergence of all things in the universe in the immaculate manner that we find them in. This is indicative of a Wise Omniscient being who brought these worlds into existence by way of His perfect knowledge, power, and wisdom. For more on this issue, refer to the excellent book by Stephen C. Meyer titled *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*. This book is very detailed in dealing with information signatures embedded inside cells.

William Dembski, Winston Ewert, and Robert Marks co-wrote a scientific paper in 2015, which was published in the *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers* (IEEE) journal. The name of the paper was ‘Algorithmic Specified Complexity in the Game of Life’. It sought to place a theoretical framework that would reveal the meaning of existence in nature.

The manifestations of mastery that have been mentioned before reveal that this universe has a purpose to it. From this, we are able to detect wisdoms in things. This nature of the universe is indicative of Allah ﷻ, Who did not create the universe and all that is in it in vain. Rather, He created it for great wisdoms

²⁹⁴ *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 271.

and objectives. Bayhaqī ﷺ said, ‘When you visually ponder how this world is and think about it, you will find it to be like a built house with everything a person residing in it would be in need of. The sky is raised like a roof; the Earth is spread out like a carpet; the stars are clustered like lamps; precious stones are stored therein like treasures; the various types of flora have been prepared for eating, wearing, and other utilities; different animals have been subjugated for riding and are used for other advantageous purposes. Man is like the owner who was made entitled to it.

‘There is a clear indication here that the world is created by way of planning, determination, and organisation, and that it has a Wise Maker Who is Omnipotent and the All-Wise. I read this in the book of Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī ﷺ.’²⁹⁵

As for the proof of the second proposition (‘Mastery and immaculateness means there is a Wise and Omniscient Doer’), its proof is the principle of causality, which has been discussed in detail previously. Mastery and immaculateness mean there was a cause. That cause is an Omniscient Doer, from whom the act of mastery emanated, as manifested in what He masterfully made.

I remember debating some youth who denied the existence of Allah. After a long discussion, they became content that there is a Higher Power over this universe, that this Higher Power is the cause of the universe coming into existence, and that He is ascribed with power. Had He not been this way, He would not have been able to be the cause of the world’s emergence. The discussion continued thereafter in proving and demonstrating that this All-Powerful Mover was also Omniscient. I told them, ‘You have admitted that the existence of masterful making is suggestive of the power of the Maker. You should therefore also admit that masterful design means the omniscience of the Maker.’

I was taken aback when one of them objected that masterful construction is not necessarily indicative of knowledge, and that it may have occurred by accident. I offered them an example from my own personal life experience: ‘One day, I was staying with family. One of my daughters was with me. She was small. Because she was small, she was only able to hold a pen with a cylindrical grasp of her hand and scribble all across the paper. All of a sudden, she raised the paper and told her mother, “Mama, dolphin!” I turned around to see what really was a dolphin.’ I said to him, ‘Would it be possible for me to say, based on this drawing alone, that my daughter knew how to draw?’ He said, ‘It is quite possible.’ I said, ‘Alright. If I wanted to ascertain whether she was able to draw, and that what she drew was not an accident, I should have been able to at least ask her to repeat drawing the same picture a few more times. If she was able, we could have said she can draw; otherwise, her first drawing would have occurred by coincidence.’

²⁹⁵ *Al-‘itiqād wa al-Hidāyah ilā Sabīl al-Rashād ‘alā Madhhab al-Salaf wa-Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*, p. 39.

He said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘Let us take the argument further. Let us say that the repeated mastery found all across the universe is indicative of the omniscience of the Maker.’ He agreed at this point. I then said to him, ‘Imagine if I saw my daughter fashioning a complex drawing of a house, clouds, Sun, trees, rivers, birds, etc. – would it be necessary for me to ask her to draw something else for me, or would these pictures be enough for me to know she is able to draw?’ He said, ‘They would be sufficient.’ I said, ‘So let us take this a little further and say that the repeated nature of masterful construction and composition across the universe suggest that the Maker has omniscience.’

The principle of causality reveals that these sorts of immaculate workings require the existence of a doer that is the cause of immaculateness, showing its effect therein. This is underscored by the fact that the probabilities of how manifestations of immaculateness come about are one of three: determinism, accident, or the will of an omniscient doer. For what we are discussing, it would not seem that it can be explained though nature’s ebb and flow, or legal determinism, as has been mentioned before. Likewise, it is not possible that this immaculateness came about by accident – also discussed before. The final possibility – that this came as a result of the will of an omniscient doer – is the only option that remains.

I want to add a fictitious yet thought-provoking discussion between a sheikh and a person named Ḥayrān ibn al-Aḍʿaf (Confused, son of the Weakest). This is in Nadīm al-Jisr’s book *The Story of Faith (Qiṣṣah al-Īmān)*. He ﷺ says:

Sheikh: Now to the needles. Take this tablet and stick a needle in it. Then stick another needle in that hole. Tell me Ḥayrān, if a rational human being saw those two needles and asked about how the second needle was placed into the hole of the first, and then a human who is known for his honesty told him that a skilled person did this from a distance of ten meters and managed to hit the hole of the first needle, then another man also known for honesty said that the one who threw it was a little boy who was born blind and the second needle fell into the hole by way of accident, which of the two options would be the most likely?

Ḥayrān: I have no doubt in my mind that the first person is more likely. But considering the honesty of both, the possibility of the second (the random throw by the blind boy) cannot be ruled out. Therefore, one cannot firmly assume that the former is speaking the truth and the latter is not.

Sheikh: So how about if the man sees a third needle in the same hole, will this indecision remain?

Ḥayrān: No, the probability of purpose would grow stronger than that of it being a coincidence, but the chances of it being on purpose still would only be a marginally stronger probability.

Sheikh: So how about when a man sees that there are ten needles, each of them stuck in the hole one after the other, entering from exactly the same point. Will it increase the probability of this being intentional?

Ḥayrān: No. The accident probability would be so weak that it would be tantamount to non-existent.

Sheikh: But if a person fitting the description of what the Qur'an says: 'But humankind is the most argumentative of all beings'²⁹⁶, comes and starts debating what rational impossibility means and what customary impossibility means, then starts arguing that this is neither rationally nor customarily impossible, though he affirms that this – on occasions – would be a very remote possibility, our rational friend must then yield.

Ḥayrān: The mind may yield, but the heart will still incline to believe that the intentional act is the most probable of the options here.

Sheikh: If we are to complicate the riddle further, let us say that the ten needles are numbered with lines. Each of them has a number on them, from 1 to 10. Without seeing what happened, we are told that the blind boy was given a bag containing these ten needles, which were placed at random. He had to put his hands into the bag to take each needle out in its correct sequence of numbers *by accident*, and then throw it at the tablet. The first would fall into the hole; the second would follow it into the same hole; the third into the same hole; the fourth likewise, and so on. All the needles stacked up behind each other into that hole according to their numerical value, and all of this happened by accident. If that argumentative friend of ours then came to prove that the probability of this all being a coincidental accident still exists, and that it is still logically possible, what would we say about this argumentative person?

Ḥayrān: I am sure that he would not be believed. The possibility of this being coincidental is so remote it is virtually impossible.

Sheikh: Ḥayrān, when it comes to very large numbers, they are self-evidently impossible.

²⁹⁶ *Al-Kahf*, 54.

Ḥayrān: I thought that this self-evidence came to us from our lived experiences of coincidental repetitions being a rarity.

Sheikh: No, this self-evidence – within the depths of our subconscious minds – is reliant on an inescapable mathematical rule.

Ḥayrān: What is this rule, sir?

Sheikh: It is the rule of probability, which states that the probability of a certain accident increases and decreases in an inversely proportional manner with the number equal to the other competing possibilities. Whenever the number of competing things decreases, the chance of success increases; whenever the competing choices increase, the chances of success decrease. If the competition is between two equal things, the chance of success would be half. If it is between ten things, the chances of success would be a tenth. This is because each choice has an equal chance of success – when there is, of course, no superiority for any one choice. To this extent, the chances of success between the competition lie in equal stead, even if they are a hundred or a thousand. However, when the numeric value increases exponentially, the chances of success would become non-existence, nay impossible.

If a blind child by chance pulls out #1 the first time, we would say that he had a one in ten chance of pulling that number out. But if he pulled out #1 and #2 in succession, this would be a one-in-a-hundred probability, because all ten would be competing in the second draw, thus making it a competition between a hundred choices. If the blind child pulls out needles #1, #2, and #3 in succession, we would say that this is a one-in-a-thousand chance, and so on. If we assume that the child pulled all ten needles in numerical order, the chance of this happening would be one in ten billion...²⁹⁷

The most famous objections to the argument from mastery and immaculateness

Having concluded the discussion on the second rational indicator for Allah's existence – the argument from systemisation and immaculateness – we now present the most salient objections that have been made to it. These objections have targeted both its propositions and its conclusion.

Objections to the first proposition: 'The universe is masterfully and immaculately made'

²⁹⁷ *Qiṣṣah al-Īmān*, p. 292.

First objection: Mastery is just a projection

This is a strange objection. I have come across atheists who reject the manifestations of mastery and greatness in this universe, all to varying degrees and under various pretences. Some are sceptical of whether the universe is masterfully made to begin with, believing that such a claim is just a personal projection on the cosmos. They claim that our reading of the universe offers us this illusion, even though it has no objective meaning in the universe. In other words, the mastery all around us does not necessarily mean that there was a masterful process of construction per se.

For example, when we see the sculpture of a human, we would appreciate the nature of construction there. After all, we, looking on at this scene, are humans as well. If it were assumed that some creation never saw a human in its entire life, he might pass by the sculpture without noting any feature of mastery therein; he would probably think this is nothing more than a regular rock, or a rock that has been eroded somewhat, without having been the subject of intervention (i.e., sculpturing) by a willing actor. Similarly, if someone were to see the letters of a language and script that he does not understand, he might think that they were just random scribbles. Therefore, seeing any feature therein would be a projection onto them.

I used to think that these sorts of views were confined to statements by philosophers on the peripheries – such as those by the atheist philosopher Baron d’Holbach (d. 1789) – and were not in circulation within modern atheist philosophy. It was not until when I read some of this in contemporary writings, as well as some discussions and encounters I personally experienced, that it dawned on me that such an objection is still in vogue.

The fact is that this objection is very odd, for it comprises a gross obstinance and a bizarre error. In fact, the very examples brought here expose the error. The sculpting of a rock by a willing actor, and the set of letters and script belonging to a specific language, reveal mastery as an objective reality in these matters; cognition and knowledge is what leads to the discovery of this reality. So whatever masterful construct exists in the universe there is, it would carry on increasing our experiences and knowledge. This process of discovery will remain so long as experience and knowledge keep on giving.

Such a form of thinking undoubtedly leads a person to negate all objective reality. If you are sceptical about whether a complex composition can offer knowledge, and you avoid this sort of conceptualisation under the pretence of the relativity of any such judgement, and that it has no objective reality to it, it will land you into becoming sceptical of everything around you, as it would be possible that everything is also just a projection and devoid of any objective value that is separate from you. This takes away any objective value from human

conceptualisation, and instead refers it to mere relative cognition that is subject to doubt, which can lead the bearer of such a philosophy into a type of sophism.

The truth is that these sceptics themselves would not behave in this way in their day-to-day lives, as it is diametrically opposed to any sound human *fitrah*, and also because its implications would lead to the destruction of any justification for discovering the world and interacting with it.

Second objection: The fallacy of fine-tuning

An important book for the New Atheists in the debate over the issue of the universe being precisely calibrated is by the atheist physicist Victor Stenger, *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning: Why the Universe is Not Designed for Us*. He by the way is also the author of *God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*, which is a key text in New Atheism.

The concept behind the book *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning* is obvious from its title. It attempts to refute the prevailing notion that the universe is characterised by a high level of fine-tuning – even at the level of its cosmological constants and events – and that our existence would have been impossible were it not for this precise balancing. This notion is widespread across the works of many scientists, both theists and atheists. In fact, Stenger himself states, ‘Even atheist physicists find this so-called “anthropic principle” difficult to explain naturally, and many think they need to invoke multiple universes to do so.’²⁹⁸

The fact is that the list of people who believe in the fine-tuning of the universe is lengthy and comprises of many names, who have a variety of ways in expressing how the phenomenon of fine-tuning came about. These people are: Barrow, Carr, Carter, Davies, Dawkins, Deutsch, Ellis, Greene, Guth, Harrison, Hawking, Linde, Page, Penrose, Polkinghorne, Rees, Sandage, Smolin, Susskind, Tegmark, Tipler, Vilenkin, Weinberg, Wheeler, Wilczek, and many others.²⁹⁹ In his book, Stenger selects a number of passages from scientists who express their amazement at this phenomenon of precise fine-tuning:

Let us look at a few quotations selected from the vast literature on the subject. Back in 1985, astronomer Edward Robert Harrison wrote: “Here is the cosmological proof of the existence of God – the design argument of Paley – updated and refurbished. The fine-tuning of the universe provides prima facie evidence of deistic design. Take your choice: blind chance that requires multitudes of universes, or design that requires only one.” Geneticist Francis Collins was the head of the Human Genome Project and at this writing directs the

²⁹⁸ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 37.

²⁹⁹ <https://letterstonature.wordpress.com/2014/08/17/carrolls-five-replies-to-the-fine-tuning-argument-number-1/>

United States National Institutes of Health. In his 2006 bestseller, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Collins argues for the following interpretation of the data: “The precise tuning of all the physical constants and physical laws to make intelligent life possible is not an accident, but reflects the action of the one who created the universe in the first place.” Physician Michael Anthony Corey writes: “The stupendous degree of fine-tuning that instantly existed between these fundamental parameters following the Big Bang reveals a miraculous level of micro-engineering that is simply inconceivable in the absence of a ‘supercalculating’ Designer. Astronomer George Greenstein asserts: “As we survey the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency – or rather Agency – must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?” And theoretical physicist Tony Rothman adds, “The medieval theologian who gazed at the night sky through the eyes of Aristotle and saw angels moving the spheres in harmony has become the modern cosmologist who gazes at the same sky through the eyes of Einstein and sees the hand of God not in angels but in the constants of nature...When confronted with the order and beauty of the universe and the strange coincidences of nature, it's very tempting to take the leap of faith from science to religion. I am sure many physicists want to. I only wish they would admit it.”³⁰⁰

These are some of the citations that Stenger mentioned. There are many other statements from scientists of various branches that reveal how they are impressed by the finely-tuned nature of the universe. Some have already been mentioned previously; others will soon follow.

Stenger’s proposal focuses on a number of data points: He argues over how precise the calculations are vis-à-vis some constants, and that the margin of error is larger than what some researchers claim. However, this should not be a problem. Even if his calculations are right and others are wrong, the argument from fine-tuning would still be intact. If a man said, ‘There is a one-in-a-million chance to win the prize’, and someone else said, ‘Actually, the prize can be won if someone manages to pick out #1 or #2’, the possibility of these two options occurring would still be considered highly improbable in light of sheer coincidence. This is of course in relation to some of the calculations he mentioned.

³⁰⁰ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 18.

It should be noted that what is required here is an alignment between the cosmological constants and the various data points, so that the universe can fulfil the required prerequisites in order to come into existence and support life. The measure of whether the universe exists or not is not down to whether it is connected to one constant or another. In other words, it is not down to whether the scale of probabilities specific to it are broadened further and sufficient to achieve the goal, so to not render the possibility of picking out the required number a coincidence. Rather, what is required is that all the other values are met.

One idea he proposes is that the collapse of the entire cosmological system does not occur just because one constant changes. It is possible that one changes and it would not have an adverse impact on the rest of the system, so long as the other constants are properly conditioned to keep the cosmos afloat. In other words, it is possible that one constant possesses numerous values; however, the other constants would need recalibration so that they match up with this new change. The whole set of constants that captures life is not confined to a single set of constants in our universe; rather, it is possible to create other sequences of chains that are able to capture life. This broadens the scope for the chance of a chain coming as an accident, without the need for the process of fine-tuning being applied.³⁰¹

The following observations can be made on this idea:

1. Even if this is true for some constants, it is not necessarily true for other cosmological constants or specific events. One of the requisite parameters for the existence of life is independent parameters. It would appear that even the slightest disruption to them would lead to the universe becoming unsuitable for life.
2. Creating numerous series of physical constants that are able to capture and secure life for the cosmos is faced by a problem: The number of possible series unable to sustain life are exceedingly more than those that are able to do so. In fact, there is no comparison. This objection does not answer the fundamental question here, which is this: How were these physical constants determined? The probability of one set of constants that can comprise of life, to the exclusion of the many other sets of constants that do not, is highly unlikely. This begs the question: Why was this set of constants selected and not any other?
3. The probability of all constants being captured by one series and becoming aligned in the manner required to support life is very low, compared to the probabilities of the physical constant falling short to support life, or falling short in a way that does not require

³⁰¹ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 70.

the other constants to undergo the required change to maintain life.

In summary, the probabilities of fine-tuning and the balancing act in the required manner are astronomically small compared to rival possibilities – or in the words of Richard Dawkins: ‘But, however many ways there may be of being alive, it is certain that there are vastly more ways of being dead, or rather not alive.’³⁰²

Stenger critiques the idea of restricting the forms of organic life to carbon forms. He argues that the notion of fine-tuning was only proposed to explain the suitability of the universe to sustain carbon-based forms of life. What prevents the possibility of other life forms that are not carbon-based but are, for example, silicon-based? If it is possible that we have life patterns that fall outside the carbon rule, the probabilities of such life emerging would still be intact, even if the values of the natural constants change from what they are right now. The most that can be said is that the constants of our universe are suitable for supporting carbon-based life; were they to change, the universe might also be able to support different forms of life.

To answer this objection, we do not need to enter into the detail of whether silicon-based life can emerge, or what timescales we should be looking at for the emergence of non-carbon forms of life. This objection is simply inadmissible in the circumstance that the universe is carefully calibrated.

As mentioned before, those sets of circumstances have been calibrated so that the universe could survive after coming into existence, and so that it does not collapse in on itself and ultimately disappear. This is in addition to the cosmological balance the universe possesses in order to create stars and planets, which have a role to play in producing elements through chemical reactions. Some patterns within the cosmos have struck such a fine balance that it has not allowed the universe to become a soup of hydrogen or a stew of helium. Fine-tuning explains numerous issues to us, one of which is the birth of life.

The most Stenger is attempting to do is to minimise the possibilities that are not in the interest of the universe, and to maximise the possibilities that are in its interest. However, the problem here is that even if we accept his thesis as accurate, the difference between the possibilities on both sides will still remain vast. This would uphold the legitimacy and standing of the question of fine-tuning and calibration. Imagine a person said, ‘The probability of this occurring is one in a billion billion billion billion billion’, and another says, ‘No, it is a hundred in a billion billion billion billion’ – one would think that the probability of its occurrence in either case is extremely low.

³⁰² *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 9.

One of the best critiques of Stenger that I have seen is the scientific paper titled *The Fine-Tuning of the Universe for Intelligent Life*³⁰³ by Luke A. Barnes, published by the Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia. It is a lengthy critique of much of what is in Stenger's book. The critique was so robust that Barnes ended up accusing Stenger of perpetrating many scientific errors. Indeed, Barnes uncovered many errors. This spurred Stenger to pen a 12-page response to Barnes called *Defending The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*³⁰⁴, only for Barnes to reply on the *Letters to Nature* blog.³⁰⁵ I conclude that the dissertation of Barnes is decisively preponderant against Stenger's thesis – for the following points:

1. Barnes deals with cosmology and has a number of published research papers on this area. This is a subject that is more aligned to our discussion than Stenger's speciality, which is in particle physics.
2. On many occasions, Stenger expresses only his personal views. As for the scientific position that Barnes operates from, it is more widespread across scientific circles.
3. Stenger operates from a strange set of propositions. Take, for example, what he says when discussing the problem of precise calibration between electron and proton mass: 'What is more, we can argue that the electron mass is going to be much smaller than the proton mass in any universe even remotely like ours.'³⁰⁶ What he is trying to say is that the small size of electrons compared to the mass of protons is natural and does not require any calibration. What is interesting is how he ended this sentence, revealing how badly he misunderstood the phenomenon of fine-tuning, which is the entire point of the discussion. Obviously, it is not surprising that universes like ours have characteristics like ours, including the small size of electrons compared to that of protons. What *is* the point of discussion here is the question: 'Why is it like this?', which is not a limited comparison with universes similar to ours, but rather with the endless number of probabilities, as represented in dissimilar universes. This is the mystery, the solution to which Stenger unfortunately believes is simple through extant knowledge of physics, without offering assumptions from the genus of the multiverse (which will be discussed later alongside other things). Stenger's position really

³⁰³ <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1112.4647v1.pdf>

³⁰⁴ <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1202/1202.4359.pdf>

³⁰⁵ <https://letterstonature.wordpress.com/2012/05/02/in-defence-of-the-fine-tuning-of-the-universe-for-intelligent-life/>

³⁰⁶ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 164.

does oversimplify the scope of the problem when asked for a natural and materialistic explanation for it.

4. Stenger adopts philosophical views that are very problematic. His scientific positions are not consistent or aligned with such views. This can cause a lot of consternation and doubt in anyone following him with regard to the true nature of his research and whether it drips of ideological preconceptions on his part. Take, for example, his discussion on the principle of causality: ‘Let’s consider premise (1). Is it based on empirical fact? Is it a fact that everything that begins has a cause? Obviously we haven’t observed the beginning of everything, so we can’t say that everything that begins has a cause. As the great Scottish philosopher David Hume (d. 1776) pointed out in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, even when we observe one event following another, we cannot conclude that a causal relation between the two exist.’³⁰⁷ Such a position should make anyone who adopts it abandon anything to do with science. To not operate from this axiom, and to instead dispute it, is to go against the scientific requirement of seeking out the natural causes of phenomena. In fact, he touched upon the issue of the possible mistakes that our senses fall into – he offers as an example: ‘The Moon is probably real.’³⁰⁸ He also mentions that space and time are only quantitative measures concocted by physicists that do not need any real existence.³⁰⁹ What also exposes his partiality to his materialistic view is that he states that the idea of the inception of the universe from aliens is more rational than the notion of a Creator.³¹⁰ On his discussion on the cosmological constants, he says, ‘Any calculation that disagrees with the data by 50 or 120 orders of magnitude is simply wrong and should not be taken seriously. We just have to await the correct calculation.’³¹¹ This passage reveals the position of principle he is biased towards, which goes against the notion of fine-tuning. What it is really saying is that the calculations must be wrong. Why? Because if they are not, it would mean that the cosmological constant really is determined. In his paper, Barnes highlighted the deficiency in Stenger’s understanding of the

³⁰⁷ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 116.

³⁰⁸ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 53.

³⁰⁹ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 51.

³¹⁰ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 23.

³¹¹ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 219.

issue, and that there is no real contradiction between the data and the mathematical calculations here.

5. In section 13 of his book, Stenger objected to fine-tuning. He did so by resorting to the computer programme he had made two decades prior, which he had named ‘MonkeyGod’. This programme can be found on his personal website. The idea behind it is to offer a type of narrative for the universe by playing around with four physical constants, in which it would be possible to create different virtual worlds with different characteristics just by retuning those constants. Stenger programmed it with a set of data that he believed to be necessary for the existence of life. The programme offers results on which virtual worlds can support life, versus the ones that cannot. Barnes thoroughly critiqued the results of this programme, stating, ‘We conclude that *MonkeyGod* is so deeply flawed that its results are meaningless.’³¹² One critique he presented was that the assumptions Stenger based life sustainability on were not taken from precise data, and that of the eight life-permitting criteria he relied upon, ‘three are incorrect, two are irrelevant, and one is insufficient. Plenty more are missing. Most importantly, all manner of cherry-picked assumptions are lurking out of sight, and the whole exercise exemplifies the cheap-binoculars fallacy. We’ll begin with the irrelevant. The length of a day and a year are not life-permitting criteria. I know of no fine-tuning article in the scientific literature defends such a limit, and for good reason – the origin and survival of primitive forms of life probably wouldn’t be affected by a shorter day or year. Plausibly, only larger organisms and ecosystems would be influenced...’³¹³

I believe this is sufficient to give a picture of some of the problems in Victor Stenger’s objection. For more on this, refer to the dispute between the two men that I alluded to in the previous pages. There is also a critical dissertation by Robin Collins entitled as *Stenger’s Fallacies*.

Third objection: The element of fine-tuning is extremely minimal compared to the vast wider universe

One position that expresses a denial of sorts – though not a complete denial – of the argument from fine-tuning is the one that acknowledges that the universe is finely balanced, but that it is miniscule amid the expansive universe, the overwhelming majority of which is not suitable for life. They claim: ‘How is it

³¹² <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1112.4647v1.pdf>

³¹³ <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1112.4647v1.pdf>

accurate for us to say that the universe has been carefully and finely-tuned when 99.9999999999% of this world is empty and unsuitable for life?’ This is an objection I frequently heard from Christopher Hitchens. In fact, when Richard Dawkins, in his famous sit down in *The Four Horsemen* video, admitted that the argument from fine-tuning is the strongest argument of theists, Hitchens interjected and offered this same objection. Richard Carrier depicts the topic by saying, ‘In fact, if we put all the lethal vacuum of outer space swamped with deadly radiation into an area the size of a house, you would never find the comparably microscopic speck of area that sustains life (it would literally be smaller than a single proton).’³¹⁴

There are two points that ought to be noted when answering this objection. Firstly, this way of presenting the objection is misleading. The idea of fine-tuning means that the universe we are in has life, even in spite of the probabilities of the existence of many other universes that are unsuitable for life, even if as small as a microscopic speck in a house. This is an extremely unique position to be in – by the very admission of physicists themselves, given the examples they offer. It is a position worthy of being recognised as such, the cause of which ought to be investigated. Consequently, the question here is not why there is a huge vacuum in the universe, but rather why life can be found in the universe in spite of the massive probability of it being unattainable. As thus, the fact that this level of fine-tuning exists – even if it is meagre compared to the rest of the universe – is sufficient to establish the required indication for the existence of God, even if this level of fine-tuning is not present in other places. It would be like a man ordering his children to organise and tidy up an extremely messy house and leaves. When he returns, he finds that a tiny part of the house has been tidied. Would it be possible to deny that this small part was not tidied by anyone, just because the rest of the house was still a disorganised mess?

Secondly, the fact that we do not know the wisdom behind the expansive universe is not a sufficient justification to relinquish our knowledge of the information on the existence of life in a minute part of this universe and overlooking it. In fact, some physicists mention that some important data for the existence of life mean there is a need for this wide expanse. For example, in a ‘Conversations from the Pale Blue Dot’ podcast episode titled *11 Responses to Fine-Tuning*³¹⁵, Luke Barnes mentions that for the universe to accommodate life in wider regions, its mass must increase there as well; if that was achieved, gravity would have to increase; if gravity increased, it would have meant that the crunch right after the Big Bang would have been accelerated. The issue therefore requires an investigation of the causes that are behind this huge expanse, and whether it

³¹⁴ <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/1365>

³¹⁵ <https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/conversations-from-the-pale-bl-23510/episodes/040-luke-barnes-11-responses-t-1005994>

has a net positive influence on the existence of life in our universe. The issue does not need to marginalise the complexity of the various parameters we need for the creation of a universe that can sustain life.

Furthermore, the value of things is not measured in material dimensions. Though we acknowledge that the size of man compared to this awesome cosmos is insignificant, it is man's spiritual element of purpose and meaning that makes him superior. The esteem and honour that Allah has given him does not prevent this universe, with all that is in it, from being created for his sake. The Arab poet said:

*You think you are of a small body
Yet the largest world is represented in you.*

It is obvious that atheists see man in this derogatory fashion, as if he is nothing more than a biological accident. They view his ultimate abode as being that of a species that is inevitably heading to annihilation. He came from annihilation (non-existence) and his destination is annihilation (death), all the while without possessing any objective value or purpose to live.

Fourth objection: Our knowledge is confined to this universe, so we cannot pass judgement on other ones

One dubious objection that attempts to throw doubt on the precision and finely-tuned nature of the universe is that we have only experienced the universe we are in; therefore, we have no way of conducting a comparison between our universe and other universes in order to ascertain how masterfully – or not – they have been made. Victor Stenger says, ‘At the same time, I see no reason to try to imagine a universe with different “laws”, since there are no such laws that we have access to as humans. Barring revelation, all we know is what we observe, and the best we can do is build models to describe those observations.’³¹⁶

The fact is that this objection demonstrates a degree of obstinance or ignorance vis-à-vis the nature of the mastery we are talking about – and an ignorance of the sheer number of examples of observable fine-tuning in our universe. On this, the physicist John Barrow said,

Take a sheet of paper and place upon it a red dot. That dot represents our universe. Now alter slightly one or more of the finely-tuned constants and physical quantities that have been the focus of our attention. As a result we have a description of another universe, which we may represent as a new dot in the proximity of the first. If that new set of constants and quantities describes a life-permitting universe, make it a red dot; if it describes a universe that is life-

³¹⁶ *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning*, p. 234.

prohibiting, make it a blue dot. Now repeat the procedure arbitrarily many times until the sheet is filled with dots. What one winds up with is a sea of blue with only a few pinpoints of red. That is the sense in which it is overwhelmingly improbable that the Universe should be life-permitting. There are simply vastly more life-prohibiting universes in our local area of possible universes than there are life-permitting universes.³¹⁷

In fact, it is self-evident that the possibility of observing mastery is not necessarily dependent on whether or not a comparison can be conducted between it and chaos, just in order for us to learn whether what is in front of us is masterfully designed or not. Mastery is a state that can be recognised in most instances without knowing what the opposite of it would look like. Generally speaking, such a train of thought shuts down the door to scientific research on the cause behind these constants in the way they are. A person of such a mentality would say, ‘It is as it is and that’s it.’ In fact, this type of thought process shuts down any possibility to convince the other side of the existence of Allah ﷻ, as it might invoke the notion that this matter is extant in our universe, and we cannot come across other universes to verify how exceptional or unique our universe is. For instance, if we discover that the human genetic code has ‘Made by Allah’ imprinted onto it, it would be probable that this opponent will even dispute that is the case. There would be no way to know whether this is an exceptional matter that could have only come from an Omnipotent and Willing Doer, or whether it is natural for the universe that we are living in.

Closely linked to this objection is the weak anthropic principle, which in itself is the oddest and flimsiest of all atheist theses, even though it is quite widespread. As mentioned before, the anthropic principle is the notion that a degree of calibration in this cosmos is necessary for the emergence of man, without which we would not have existed. The question on the back of this would be: So what caused our universe to be as it is? As for the weak anthropic principle, it is confined to a small part of the principle without entering into the maze of questions that would ensue as a result. It says this: Had the universe not been calibrated in the precise manner it has been, we would not have come into existence to speak about it. In other words: Because we exist, the universe must have been finely-tuned for us to exist. Consequently, the probability of our existence in a universe that allows us to live is actually 100%, and it is therefore not surprising or questionable at all why we came into existence.

John Leslie highlights the problem of this objection through this example: Imagine a man was presented for execution. When he was brought to the gallows, and before his eyes closed, he saw a hundred expert snipers in front of him, all of

³¹⁷ *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision*, p. 113.

whom had trained their rifles on him. He shut his eyes, and then heard the sound of fire as the rifles were shot. He held his breath as he thought he was about to die, but he felt nothing. He felt his body, and noticed he had not been impacted by even one bullet. Is it possible that this could have occurred by accident? Note that the snipers were experts, and it is highly unlikely they could have all missed. He started to think: ‘Perhaps they conspired not to kill me, or perhaps someone bribed them all to miss, or perhaps there was some other reason.’ The blindfold was removed from him. It turned out he was among a hundred other people, and the number of people to be executed was 101. Of course, in this case, one would still be alive.³¹⁸

The rational position on this would be to find out the cause of why he was not killed. However, as per the objection of the sceptics, there is no need to be surprised that he is still alive and that all bullets missed him, because he would have been dead had he been hit. This is the problematic point of this overly simplistic train of thought: We must not be surprised at that huge number of probabilities in the face of the precise calibration of the cosmos, because you are there to see it. It would be just like a man who won at gambling a thousand times in a row – if we ask how he won all this money in this manner, would it be convincing to say, ‘He won this money because he won the game every time he played it – had he not won the game, he would not have won it’?

The fact is that this type of objection is evading the quite legitimate question of why this weak possibility for the finely balanced universe being the way it is was found, in comparison to the infinite probabilities of imbalanced universes. Martin Rees said, ‘One hardheaded response is that we couldn’t exist if the laws had boring consequences. We manifestly are here, so there is nothing to be surprised about. I’m afraid this leaves me unsatisfied. I’m impressed by a well-known analogy given by the philosopher John Leslie...’³¹⁹

These are the most salient objections to the concept of the universe being finely-tuned. I would think most people would not dispute this. Both sensory instinctiveness and scientific facts suggest it. Had our universe been devoid of any effect of fine-tuning, it would have been substantially different from what it is. In fact, we would not have been here to discuss this difference to begin with.

Objections to the second proposition: ‘Fine-tuning requires something that does it’

Objections here are based on the notion that the manifestations of mastery and immaculateness in this world do not necessarily mean that they emanated from an Omniscient, Willing, and Omnipotent Doer. These objections assert that it is

³¹⁸ John Leslie, *Universes*, p. 148.

³¹⁹ *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science*, p. 213.

possible that these manifestations came about as a result of natural and material causes instead. If we look beyond the issues of coincidence and determinism as two suitable answers to explain this phenomenon of the universe's intricacy for the reasons outlined before, we will see there are many proposals by atheists to explain this mastery. These alternative proposals represent the most significant objections, with some of them being outlined below.

First objection: The theory of evolution

This theory dominates biology. In fact, its influence stretches to multiple ideological and cognitive branches. Highlighting the nature of the contemporary Western cultural identity, Dr. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Masīrī stated it is 'Darwinist modernism'.

The best representation of evolution that opposes the idea of intelligent design built into living beings is the thesis offered by Richard Dawkins in his book *Climbing Mount Improbable*. The thesis goes like this: Imagine we are on a high mountain. One side is extremely steep and cannot be negotiated. The other side is somewhat steep but not enough to put people off from walking up to ascend to the summit. We can therefore try to reach the summit from the extremely steep side even though it is shorter, or we can ascend from the other side in easier fashion. However, we would need to take the longer route to reach the summit.

In this example, let us assume that the complex biological systems are the summit – the possibility of reaching these systems from the short way is very hard, because any gradual self-composition of such systems would be impossible. However, these systems can self-compose through natural selection by way of retaining those characteristics that will ensure their survival and allow them to evolve to the next phase, and likewise for future steps – step by step – until we reach the summit.

I remember discussing this once with some youth who had been influenced by atheism. One of them raised an objection that was so brazenly inspired by the above argument. After a lengthy discussion, he admitted that coincidence is not suitable as an explanation for the manifestations of complexity, composition, and mastery in our existence. He said to me, 'The complexity we see today in the universe and living beings could not have really come into existence simply in one go out of coincidence. However, what if all of this in the beginning was simple, but then with the passing of time, evolved until it became what we now see to be complex compositions? It would be impossible that man, for example, just left the water in one go because of random chemical reactions; however, that a cell left by chance would be more plausible, which then started to gradually evolve until various living beings – including man – emerged.'

Away from debating the details of whether there ever was a simple cell, how plausible it was for existence to appear as an accident, or that it was the beginning of all life, the basic idea of evolution is very clear. The ‘Dangerous Idea’ (as expressed by Daniel Dennett in the title of his book) of Charles Darwin’s theory is that complex systems can gradually emerge over a lengthy period of time – it is not necessary that they come into existence in one go.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion on Darwin’s theory or the objections that can be laid at some of its details. This would require an entirely separate piece of research, as can be appreciated by anyone who has some interest in this issue. What I want to focus on is to scrutinise the connection between this theory and the concept of Allah’s existence. In other words, does this theory really comprise of a reasonable objection against the notion that mastery and immaculateness are indicative of the existence of Allah ﷻ? Perhaps I can summarise this issue into the following points:

1. Is there an inherent correlation between Darwinism and atheism? This is a point of contention in Western discourse. I have seen a lengthy documentary on this, as well as a discussion between Kenneth Miller and Ursula Goodenough titled *Does Evolution Imply Atheism?*, and a number of books.

Richard Dawkins insists there is a link between the theory of evolution and atheism. In fact, he asserts that his journey of atheism began through the theory. However, is that correlation really so?

It would appear that there is no necessary link between the two. We see that there are many theists who also believe in evolution. In fact, Darwin himself was not an atheist when he wrote his seminal work on evolutionary biology, *On the Origin of Species*. As thus, the theory per se was not a cause for him denying Allah; rather, his atheism came about later in his life when one of his daughters died, through which he became gripped by the problem of evil and divine justice.

The question must be restated: Is this sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is no actual correlation between the theory of evolution and atheism? In other words, are evolutionary theists prey to scientific contradiction? Or is the presence of theist evolutionists sufficient to show that there is no link between the two? It would seem to me that there is no link, though not because such people exist or even at a theoretical level, but rather because there is no rational block which prevents someone from believing in Allah and also believing in the theory of evolution. This can be clarified further in the next point.

2. Darwinism focuses on biological systems. Though these systems are manifestations of mastery, or as Dawkins puts it in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*: ‘Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a

purpose'³²⁰, design per se is not the point of dispute here. What is the point of dispute here is whether design merely gives the impression of purpose, or whether it was indeed designed for a purpose?

Whatever the case, the signs of mastery, brilliance, immaculateness, and magnificence go well beyond the field of biology. Darwinism has nothing to do with those other fields, even though some – with clever rhetoric – may like to interpolate Darwinism into those subject areas as well. For example, the universe constants, the laws of physics that organise it, the circumstances of its very first moments, the quantities of matter, and other things that are formed in it have no bearing on the theory of evolution at all. Darwinism is unable to offer an explanation for these issues. The most that can be said, even if it were true, is that Darwinism offers an explanation of a limited space in science, not the entirety of existence. In spite of this, Darwinism does not negate the role of God, even in the biological space, as will be discussed momentarily. This is why it was quite the exaggeration on Richard Dawkins's part to subtitle his book *The Blind Watchmaker* with: *Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*.

3. It is rationally possible that this theory is part of the method of Allah ﷻ in the process of creating, and that He ﷻ used evolution to create various genera and species. Though the creation of Adam ﷺ has been decided by scripture insofar as Islam is concerned, it remains rationally possible that other living beings – in both the animal and the plant kingdoms – were created in this manner.

I cannot see anything in the religion that would prevent the notion of evolution for these two kingdoms. However, it should be pointed out that just because something is possible, it does not mean it actually occurred, for that would require evidence and reasoning in order to demonstrate its veracity and real-life applications – evidence I do not see forthcoming. To the contrary, what I do see is that the theory of evolution has many holes in it, and is in a serious quandary. I once again excuse myself from delving into these details and objections, as that would be too lengthy for a discussion; such a topic should be dealt with in a standalone book. However, I should quickly mention some of the more salient objections.

One humorous objection is what the agnostic David Berlinski mentioned:

The interesting argument about the whale, which is a mammal after all – it belongs to the same group of organisms as a dog, a human

³²⁰ *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 1.

being, a chimpanzee, or a tiger – the interesting argument about a whale is that if its origins were land-based originally, then we have some crude way of assessing quantitatively – not qualitatively – but quantitatively the scope of the project of transformation. The project is very simple – let's put it in vividly accessible terms. You've got a cow. You want to teach it how to live all of its life in the open ocean, still retaining its air-breathing characteristics. What do you have to do from an engineering point of view to change the cow into a whale? This is crude, but it gives you the essential idea. Now if the same question were raised with respect to a car and you asked what it would take to change a car into a submarine, we would understand immediately it would take a great many changes, the project is a massive engineering project of redesign and adaptation. Well the same question occurs with respect to that proverbial cow. Virtually every feature of the cow has to be changed, has to be adapted. But since we know that life on Earth and life in the water are fundamentally different enterprises, we have some sense of the number of changes. You know, anytime a science avoids coming to grips with numbers, it's somehow immersing itself in perhaps an unavoidable but certainly an unattractive miasma. Here's a chance actually to put some numbers on calculations. We're not talking about genetics – we're talking about simple numbers. The skin has to change completely – it has to become impermeable to water. That's one change. Breathing apparatus has to change. A diving apparatus has to be put in place. Lactation systems have to be designed. The eyes have to be protected. The hearing has to be altered. Salivary organs have to be changed. Feeding mechanisms have to be changed. After all, a cow eats grass; a whale doesn't. As I say, I've tried to do some of these calculations. The calculations are certainly not hard. But they're interesting because I stopped at 50,000 – that is morphological changes. And don't forget these changes are not independent – they're all linked: if you change an organism's visual system, you have to change a great many parts of its cerebellum, its cerebrum, its nervous system. All of these changes are coordinated. So when we're talking about an evolutionary sequence such as this, what's interesting about the cow-to-whale transition – and I'm just using this as an easily accessible idea – what's interesting about the cow-to-whale transition is that we can see a different environment is going to impose severe design constraints on a possible evolutionary sequence. How are these constraints met if they're roughly 50,000? If they're two million constraints, how are those meant? And what does this suggest about

what we should see in the fossil record? To my way of thinking, if Darwinian hypotheses are correct, it should suggest an enormous plethora of intermediary animals between say *ambulocetus* and the next step. That won't solve all problems – one wants to know what's directing this change, if anything. But at least it will put it in the ballpark of a quantitative estimate, which is hardly ever done.'³²¹

The problem here is that fossil records are not helpful in putting together the missing links in between what the evolution theory describes as first forms and evolved forms. This is a major flaw in Darwinist theory. Of course, Darwinists will show some intermediary links and claim – for example – they have found ten of them. However, this is an extremely meagre number compared to what should have actually been discovered for what is such a critical question. Where are the rest of the intermediary links?

It is like someone who takes a daily photograph of their child for several years, and then makes them into a motion video so the gradual changes in the child's face and body can be seen as a time lapse. It would not be problematic if some pictures here and there were missing, as the gradual nature of change would still be reflected in the final video album. This is exactly what should have happened with the theory of evolution. Fossil records are tantamount to a series of images that showcase the gradual evolutionary process. The problem here is that the quantity of preserved 'images' is far less than the number of images that have been identified, thus rendering the lost links to be the rule, not the exception to the rule.

This problem led the famous evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould and the palaeontologist Niles Eldredge to propose an evolutionary model that is based on the notion of sudden jump phases, which they named 'punctuated equilibrium'. It states that evolution does not continuously occur over a long period as is widely understood, but rather in a series of 'jumps' over short periods of time which are then punctuated by lengthy periods of stability – or stasis – of the species. They argue that fossil records have not recorded a gradual change because of this 'lengthy stasis and rapid evolution' cycle. In this model, it would be possible for evolution to take place from point A to point Z in a series of leaps, with the window of actual evolution being extremely narrow, as opposed to the conventional view of evolution. Though this solution answers one question, it opens up a can of worms and introduces greater problems, all of which explains why this model of evolution has not gained wider acceptance. In fact, Gould himself retracted his view towards the end of his life.

Another problem is in relation to macroevolution, which is evolution of taxa above the species level (like genera, families, orders, etc.). Evolution denotes

³²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iFnyCjcodY>

change over a specific period of time, which can occur in one species. For example, dogs can change and adapt their size, length, shape, colour, and other features. This may also potentially include dogs evolving out of ancient canids, thus diverging from the wolf species. Such evolution is referred to as microevolution, which can be observed. This is not as problematic, and the conditions and tools to bring about this type of evolution are known.

What is problematic is the evolution that suggests the ‘aquatics → semiaquatics → reptiles → mammals → birds’ evolution model. In the Darwinist model, humans are said to have evolved from aquatic forms. The problem here lies in the notion that humans share a common ancestor with flies, plants, and even bacteria, as they are all part of the evolutionary tree that is branching out. The theory postulates that such large-scale evolution was a result of slight changes over millions of years. What was the probability of this evolution? What were the conditions that pushed a class of living beings out from one genus into another? This is something that Darwinism has not coped well with, as the problem lies in whether such a series of changes ever occurred for all living creatures.

The evolutionist Gerald A. Kerkut makes a distinction between what he calls the ‘General Theory of Evolution’ and ‘Specific Theory of Evolution’. The latter is in relation to new phyla; the former is about how different phyla go back to a common root. Asserting that the ‘General Theory of Evolution’ is just a hypothesis, he says,

This theory can be called the “General Theory of Evolution” and the evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis. It is not clear whether the changes that bring about speciation are of the same nature as those that brought about the development of new phyla [major divisions of living things, of which there are about 80, including microbes]. The answer will be found in future experimental work and not by the dogmatic assertions that the General Theory of Evolution must be correct because there is nothing else that will satisfactorily take its place.’³²²

So we can start to comprehend how difficult it would be: the creation of an entirely new species does not require re-engineering information from the genetic code or even triggering random change therein, which would on most occasions be harmful. Just the evolutionary journey of microbes to man requires the concoction of new and complex data mechanisms that can create muscles, bones, cells, nerves, etc. The genome of a single fundamental microbe contains around 500,000 nucleotides; the genome of a human comprises of 3 billion nucleotides.

³²² *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*, p. 18.

This tells us that the scope of information generated inside the genome is massive. This leads to the next question: Where did this information come from?

In 1980, a group of the most important evolutionists in the world came together at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. In the *Science* magazine's report on the conference, Roger Lewin wrote, 'The central question of the Chicago conference was whether the mechanisms underlying microevolution can be extrapolated to explain the phenomena of macroevolution. At the risk of doing violence to the positions of some of the people at the meeting, the answer can be given as a clear, No.'³²³

It is therefore quite misleading for Darwinists to object to others by telling them, 'As you do not believe in evolution, stop taking medicine.' This is misleading because evolution comprises of an acceptable form (microevolution) and one that is the point of contention (macroevolution). For example, the evolution inside bacteria that makes future versions of it more resistant to antibiotics – which requires doctors and scientists to develop antibiotics to combat new strains of bacteria – is not part of the discussion at all. Rather, the point of contention is whether humans and bacteria have a common ancestor.

- There is a distinction to be made between microevolution and macroevolution. The former can be acceptable, whereas the latter is fraught with problems and has a long way to prove itself. It seems that the theory of evolution is propelled by the fact that it has taken some preliminary steps to start explaining the complexity of the universe; however, it is far from reaching the summit. This is similar to training horses to jump over obstacles. A horse would be first trained to jump over a low obstacle; then it would be raised slightly, then further, and so on. However, there would come a height threshold which it would not be able to negotiate.
- If we understand that one driver of Darwinist evolution is random mutation, the issue becomes infinitely more complex, because evolution would then most definitely be reliant on accident – a fact which Richard Dawkins attempts to conceal by magnifying the process of natural selection. Natural selection is how the suitable characteristics of a living entity survive. However, how these characteristics emerge to begin with is the job of genetic mutation, which is how modern Darwinism sees it. Genetic mutation is absolutely random and coincidental. Beneficial mutations can occur and they would be to the advantage of the living entity; however, such mutations are rare compared to

³²³ *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*, p. 18.

harmful mutations, or neutral mutations that have no impact. Even if these beneficial mutations bring about a new characteristic, the living entity hosting it must be in a specific environment that is suitable for the mutations to flourish. This increases the difficulty of it emerging just by chance. We therefore have two accidents in practice: the coincidence of the new characteristic emerging, and the coincidence of this characteristic being suitable for the needs of the living entity. As thus, the claim that evolution always has an upward trajectory is incorrect, as it can go the opposite way as well. In any case, evolution always occurs in minute steps.

Interestingly, in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, Richard Dawkins describes an experiment he had done with a computer:

I don't know who it was first pointed out that, given enough time, a monkey bashing away at random on a typewriter could produce all the works of Shakespeare. The operative phrase is, of course, given enough time. Let us limit the task facing our monkey somewhat. Suppose that he has to produce, not the complete works of Shakespeare but just the short sentence "Methinks it is like a weasel" (from *Hamlet*), and we shall make it relatively easy by giving him a typewriter with a restricted keyboard, one with just the 26 (capital) letters, and a space bar. How long will he take to write this one little sentence? The sentence has 28 characters in it, so let us assume that the monkey has a series of discrete "tries", each consisting of 28 bashes at the keyboard. If he types the phrase correctly, that is the end of the experiment. If not, we allow him another "try" of 28 characters. I don't know any monkeys, but fortunately my 11-month old daughter is an experienced randomising device, and she proved only too eager to step into the role of monkey typist. Here is what she typed on the computer:

UMMK JK CDZZ F ZD DSDSKSM
 S SS FMCV PU I DDRGLKDXRRDO
 RDTE QDWFDVIOY UDSKZWCCVYT
 H CHVY NMGNBAYTDFCCVD D
 RCDFFYYRM N DFSKD LD K WDWK
 JKAUIZMZI UXDKIDISFUMDKUDXI

She has other important calls on her time, so I was obliged to program the computer to simulate a randomly typing baby or monkey...'³²⁴

He went on to say that he wrote the sentence in Pascal instead of BASIC, which he managed to do so in 11 seconds only.

The reality is this experiment has no worth in expressing how the theory of evolution actually is. The computer programme has been pre-set to reach an intended target, and therefore it situates the letters in their correct places on each try, coming closer and closer to the correct answer with the number of attempts it has, until it reaches the correct answer. As for the blind watchmaker, he does not have a goal to begin with. This renders the programme useless in uncovering the power of natural selection over randomness vis-à-vis the development of genera and the creations overall. It is strange that Dawkins himself admits that this experiment is dangerously misleading in a number of ways, one of which is: 'Evolution has no long-term goal. There is no long-distance target, no final perfection to serve as a criterion for selection...'³²⁵

- Obviously, the series of objections to this theory can continue. One such objection is the dilemma of the Cambrian explosion. The Cambrian Period is when a number of complex species suddenly appeared, as if they were planted there without having evolved from any primitive forms. This is a famous objection that is acknowledged by atheists, starting from Darwin himself, followed by other evolutionists after him. One of the best books I have studied for this issue is Steven C. Meyer's *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design*. The problem deepened when it was revealed that the complexity of those living organisms at that time – compared to those before them – would mean implanting a lot of genetic information into the genome dedicated to the creation of new body plans; it would seem genetic mutations alone could not have spurred the level of required information. The book sparked debate and attracted various responses, including *Debating Darwin's Doubt: A Scientific Controversy That Can No Longer Be Denied* by David Klinghoffer.
- Another objection is the problem of evolution's geological timescale. In other words, Darwinism has a problem with explaining many of the highly complex phenomena, such as the emergence of understanding, conscience, instincts, etc., how the explosion of cell information matches up with Darwinist

³²⁴ *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 46.

³²⁵ *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 50.

randomness, how manifestations of irreducible complexity are to be explained, as well as many other matters.

I really do not want to go further into discussing Darwinism. As you can see, it can become a lengthy discussion very quickly. What I wanted to do here is to throw in a flavour of the various problems facing it. Generally speaking, whether the theory is correct in itself or is proven to be demonstrably false, the matter has no connection with denying the existence of Allah ﷻ. All what Darwinism offers is an explanation of the mystery of life – it does not offer a full answer to this question. Forget the point of mastery and immaculateness in the universe – even the very question of how life came about is outside the remit of Darwinism. Any explanation on life it can offer – which would be in biology, and assuming the explanation is correct – does not automatically have to be in opposition to the existence of Allah, for it is possible that it is an acceptable view and is part and parcel of Allah’s creation process. In the Islamic conceptualisation, the connection between the natural laws of the universe and the acts of Allah ﷻ is evident. Muslim rationality does not see any contradiction between, for example, Allah causing rain and the water cycle, for it is Allah who determines cause and effect in nature.

I conclude this point by reiterating that one of the biggest drivers for many atheists who want to cling onto Darwinism, and their narrow minded attitude when hearing any opposing view or objection to it, is that it is born from a materialistic outlook, through which everything in the cosmos must be explained. The viewpoint of the cosmos from which atheists operate is that which restricts them to natural materialistic causes, such as how to explain the inception of life and the variety therein, even if some part of it is explained by randomness or blind nature. They do this in order to escape the problem of admitting to the existence of anything outside their narrow materialism. This is a biased position that causes real problems in one’s sincerity to the search for the truth in these matters. An example of this is what one of them said: ‘Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic.’³²⁶

The fact is that the acceptance of Darwin’s theory in the case of most of its proponents is not necessarily because of the various proofs that support it, even though they obviously have a role to play for them to adhere to the theory. It is rather because the theory offers a natural and materialistic option to explain the variety in the creation and the genera. Therefore, if we assume that the theory is offered without any evidence, we will see that many would even then accept it as the sole plausible materialistic model that explains the diversity in the biological world we see. If the world is then observed through the lens of Darwin, it is

³²⁶ *Evolution’s Achilles’ Heels*, p. 9.

inevitable that some imagery and scenery would be picked up on and treated as evidence for the accuracy of the theory, when in fact that is not necessarily the case, as there might be other explanations for those phenomena if and when we take off those tainted glasses.

Add to this the fact that this issue is one of hot debate in Western society and in the public domain. It has progressively gotten worse and created bigotry all round, so much so that there is a huge amount of propaganda on all sides that has resulted in a loss of the scientific balance required when discussing this issue. It has become like science's version of the untouchable holy chest.³²⁷ The position of anyone from the opposition is described as anti-science, and bearers of such views are accused of backwardness. For many – even in Western society – it has become difficult to critique this. This is the observation of researchers like the biologist Jerry Bergman in his *Slaughter of the Dissidents* trilogy of books. Bergman is one of the people listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the Midwest*, and *Who's Who in Science and Religion*, published by Marquis. The 2008 documentary *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* can also be seen, which reveals the intellectual oppression exercised by the academic establishment against those who oppose Darwin's theory in Western society.

For example, Richard Dawkins is known for being extremely assertive and making bigoted statements in favour of evolution, so much so that many of his proclamations go far beyond science and into dogma and ideology. This has severe repercussions on his outlook on the universe, life, and existence. He famously said, 'It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that).'³²⁸

Is this level of confidence in Darwin's theory the result of impartial scientific research? Or does it reveal his blind faith in the theory, well beyond what is dictated by their interpretation of science? In his book *The God Delusion*, he said, 'This book will advocate an alternative view: any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution.'³²⁹

What does Dawkins actually want to convey through this passage? In one of his discussions, the interviewer and former religion affairs correspondent at *The Times* Ruth Gledhill asked him,

But was there not, in his mind, a tiny possibility that one of these future physicists could discover God in one of these dimensions?'

³²⁷ Translator's note: This is in reference to the story of ʾIḳlūt in the Qur'an; it also has been mentioned in the biblical scriptures. Another analogy could have been the golden calf.

³²⁸ <https://secularhumanism.org/2001/07/ignorance-is-no-crime/>

³²⁹ *The God Delusion*, p. 31.

Dawkins: Well, I'm convinced that future physicists will discover something at least as wonderful as any god you could ever imagine.

Gledhill: Why not call it God?

Dawkins: I don't think it's helpful to call it God.

Gledhill: OK, but what would 'it' be like?

Dawkins: I think it'll be something wonderful and amazing and something difficult to understand. I think that all theological conceptions will be seen as parochial and petty by comparison.

When you read this, you cannot help but doubt whether you are actually reading the words of the most infamous and hardcore atheist. Yet, he goes on to say, 'But that gigantic intelligence itself would need an explanation. It's not enough to call it God, it would need some sort of explanation such as evolution. Maybe it evolved in another universe and created some computer simulation that we are all a part of. These are all science-fiction suggestions but I am trying to overcome the limitations of the 21st-century mind. It's going to be grander and bigger and more beautiful and more wonderful and it's going to put theology to shame.'³³⁰ Dawkins had similar things to say in the *Expelled* documentary.

As you can see, such a statement is far removed from the spirit of empirical science and exposes a blind faith in Darwinism, not only in relation to the observable universe, but existence itself. There cannot ever be a way to acquire a thinking mind unless it is through a slow and gradual route. If Dawkins wants to criticise theists for their faith in the notion of a Creator, he should know that he too has a similar faith-based bias in favour of Darwinism.

But there is no need for us to make deductions from his statements – we can take his own explicit words. On *BBC Radio 4*, Fi Glover asked him the annual *edge.org* question,

What do you believe is true even though you cannot prove it?

Dawkins: Well, my response was about Darwinism, which is my own field. Darwinism is the explanation for life on this planet, but I believe that all intelligence, all creativity, and all design anywhere in the universe is the direct or indirect product of Darwinian natural selection. It follows that design comes late in the universe, after a period of Darwinian evolution. Design cannot precede evolution and therefore cannot underlie the universe. That was my response.³³¹

This answer, as you can see, exposes how much Dawkins exaggerates Darwinism, and that he has a healthy dose of blind faith for its power and

³³⁰ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/god-in-other-words-wvkzwdjwxxz>

³³¹ <https://www.edge.org/edgenews/question/2005>

influence. His position on the existence of the Creator goes back to this very deep faith in Darwinism on his part, not to scientific fact. In spite of his extreme partiality towards Darwin's theory, it is strange to see Dawkins adopt what is a surprisingly cool attitude – which may even come across as borderline sceptical – to Darwin's view in one of his books. He said, 'Darwin may be triumphant at the end of the twentieth century, but we must acknowledge the possibility that new facts may come to light which will force our successors of the twenty-first century to abandon Darwinism or modify it beyond recognition.'³³²

Is the person who said this really the same as the one who made all those previous emphatic statements? Why then are those statements stated in such an unequivocal manner? It would appear though that this somewhat nuanced passage has been superseded by the more emphatic statements he made, which treat Darwin's theory to be settled scientific fact – or even a theological issue that ought to be believed in even without any evidence.

This is just one model of atheist dogma, and their materialistic faith in the unseen. There are many other examples of this, such as the belief of many atheists that the universe is pre-eternal, and the multiverse or parallel universe theory, etc.

Second objection: The multiverse theory

This objection is based on the notion that our universe is not the only universe in existence, but there are rather an infinite or an immeasurable number of universes. This large number of universes would explain how our universe is precise and finely tuned, without the need to assume there was a willing doer who created our universe. In other words, within the gargantuan number of universes, there is bound to be one which is conditioned perfectly for us. It is like the lottery: The chances of a person winning the billionaire prize is extremely low; however, the chance of at least one person winning is high.

To clarify their view further, they offer this example: Imagine a man was presented for execution. When he was brought to the gallows, and before his eyes closed, he saw a hundred expert snipers in front of him, all of whom had trained their rifles on him. He shut his eyes, and then heard the sound of fire as the rifles were shot. He held his breath as he thought he was about to die, but he felt nothing. He felt his body and noticed he had not been impacted by even one bullet. Is it possible that this could have occurred by accident? Note that the snipers were experts, and it is highly unlikely they could have all missed. He started to think: 'Perhaps they conspired not to kill me, or perhaps someone bribed them all to miss, or perhaps there was some other reason.' The blindfold was removed from

³³² *The Devil's Chaplain*, p. 81.

him. It turned out he was among a hundred other people, and the number of people to be executed were 101. Of course, in this case, one would still be alive.

This is the view Stephen Hawking proposed in his book *The Grand Design*, which he co-authored with Leonard Mlodinow. It reads: ‘The fine-tunings in the laws of nature can be explained by the existence of multiple universes. Many people through the ages have attributed to God the beauty and complexity of nature that in their time seemed to have no scientific explanation. But just as Darwin and Wallace explained how the apparently miraculous design of living forms could appear without intervention by a supreme being, the multiverse concept can explain the fine-tuning of physical law without the need for a benevolent creator who made the universe for our benefit.’³³³ It is also the central idea that Dawkins relied upon in his book *The God Delusion* as he responded to the theists’ argument from fine-tuning.

The multiverse theory is in fact an umbrella term for various models, all of which are hotly contested in the scientific community. However, all agree for now that these are all merely quantitative assumptions that have no evidence in terms of how it is actually is. These models are as follows:

- The cyclic model or oscillating model

This was touched upon earlier on in the first rational argument. It proposes that the universe explodes and expands to the farthest limit possible, then it collapses on itself (or crunches), and the process is repeated. In each iteration, the universe has different universal constants in which these numbers can experiment their attempts at creating life – a process that goes on and on. This is because the number of times this can happen is limitless, so the desired numbers that would be conducive to life would inevitably come.

This model has a number of problems. The very idea of oscillation is not acceptable, especially in light of Vilenkin’s views that assert it is impossible for the explosion-crunch process to continue from pre-eternality into infinity – the universe must have a definite beginning, as discussed previously. Even if it is assumed that this model is accurate, it would run into problems with the second law of thermodynamics, which states that entropy can only increase. The universe begins with order; as it expands, it would switch to greater entropy. When the universes crunches, it would not return to the same level of order that it previously had, but rather to a lesser degree of order. When the next explosion occurs there will be less order, meaning life would be even more improbable. In fact, if entropy was to continue to increase as per the implication of the oscillating model, the universe would reach a state of thermodynamic equilibrium – something that has obviously not yet occurred.

³³³ *The Grand Design*, p. 210.

will fail – as some see it – to offer the required number of universes that would make it possible for it to create the accidental lucky universe.

- String theory

This theory states that all matter in all forms is ultimately replaced by one-dimensional objects called strings, which are – unlike zero-dimensional elementary particles – one-dimensional extended entities with lengths of 10^{-33} cm. These strings vibrate, and determine the substance of things, namely protons, photons, quarks, etc. Because these strings are found in multi-dimensional spaces (the three spatial dimensions as well as time), they reach ten-dimensional spacetime or even more in some models. Based on this, the forms these strings can assume is approximately a huge 10^{500} . Each model can make a universe in its own fashion, in which strings would be different to other universes.

- Parallel universe

This was proposed by Max Tegmark. It considers each probability to be in actual existence in any one universe. So when a six-faced dice is thrown, there are six universes with each number showing up in the six universes. In a similar fashion, any possibility you can think of would be represented in the number of infinite and parallel universes. It does not seem to me that physicists deal with these theories with the seriousness they are dealt with on television and in sci-fi movies. In brief, it can be said that the idea of the multiverse has become the last resort for many atheists to cling onto when they are confronted with the fine-tuning argument and the fact that this universe has been masterfully and immaculately created. As the philosopher Neil Manson put it, it is ‘the last resort for the desperate atheist’.³³⁶

This can be discussed in light of the following points:

1. Everything that has been mentioned is just random estimates from physicists. It is not based on any actual empirical data. In fact, these estimates are unable to offer any forecasts on future science. Most of those who make such claims admit that there is no material evidence that there is another universe different from the one we live in, let alone the concept of an infinite or quasi-infinite multiverse.

Even though Martin Rees preferred the theory of the multiverse over intelligent design, he admitted that the multiverse theory is just an unsubstantiated hypothesis, and that his inclinations were merely based on instinct.³³⁷ In fact, in a footnote on how the multiverse theory is a suitable way to explain why our universe is well tuned, Richard Dawkins himself said, ‘Susskind gives a splendid

³³⁶ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 299.

³³⁷ *Big Bang, Big God: A Universe Fit for Life?*, p. 133.

advocacy of the anthropic principle in the megaverse. He says the idea is hated by most physicists. I can't understand why. I think it is beautiful – perhaps because my consciousness has been raised by Darwin.’³³⁸

Paul Davies clearly states that only a minority of scientists – albeit a growing one – supports the multiverse theory: ‘A minority of scientists, but a growing one, now support the multiverse theory in one version or another.’³³⁹ Under the section heading ‘Many Scientists Hate the Multiverse Idea’, he said, ‘Nevertheless, the backlash against the multiverse idea has been fierce. Prominent scientists and commentators have used words such as fantasy, virus, and intellectually bankrupt in their denunciations. Paul Steinhardt, Albert Einstein Professor at Princeton University, finds the entire concept so distasteful that he has simply closed his mind to it: “This is a dangerous idea that I am simply unwilling to contemplate”, he has declared.’³⁴⁰

A thought-provoking panel session titled *Multiverse: One Universe or Many?* at the World Science Festival in 2013 brought together a number of scientists, including Andrei Linde, Alan Guth, Neil Turok, and Andreas Albrecht. In this discussion, Turok said, ‘The multiverse is certainly in our minds. Whether it is in reality is for me a very open question. What I would say is that the evidence from last year from the Large Hadron Collider in discovering the Higgs boson goes strongly against the multiverse. Instead, most theorists were expecting more than one Higgs boson, lots of other particles, and lots of complications. Instead, the Large Hadron Collider found just one Higgs boson with amazingly simple properties – properties which indicate that perhaps we can trace what happened to the Higgs field all the way back to the singularity itself, and they point to extraordinary simplicity in that singularity. Likewise, the Planck satellite is showing us a far simpler pattern than what the inflationary models in general were predicting. Inflation isn't really a theory. It is a vast collection of models. And the vast majority of those models have ruled out by the data. So I would say the universe is giving us a glimpse of extraordinary simplicity and beauty in its structure. What we need now are series of principles and mathematics which explain the simplicity we see. The multiverse is all going in the wrong direction.’³⁴¹ Likewise, in Richard Dawkins's meeting with Steven Weinberg, Weinberg said on multiple occasions that the multiverse theory is just an estimate at best.

The issue is further complicated given that many physicists admit they do not have any way of empirically verifying that those universes existed at inception, even if they indeed do exist now. They add that the most that theoretical physics

³³⁸ *The God Delusion*, p. 145.

³³⁹ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 298.

³⁴⁰ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 194.

³⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUW7patpm9s>

can offer in this space are mathematical theoretical models only, without any material evidence. This clearly reveals that, when atheists are asked point blank about the natural and empirical evidence for the existence of the multiverse, they fall completely flat and are unable to answer. Paul Davies makes a note on this issue, as he reveals the ‘faith’ aspect of this view: ‘Of course, one might find it easier to believe in an infinite array of universes than in an infinite Deity, but such a belief must rest on faith rather than observation.’³⁴²

2. If we look carefully at the choices offered by physicists that postulate an infinite number of universes to deal with the fine-tuning problem, we will find that they are based on preconceived notions, as well as guesswork built on other guesswork. The idea of inflation is not a point of scientific consensus.

In the panel discussion *Multiverse: One Universe or Many?*, in which theory pioneer Alan Guth and multiverse theory developer Andrei Linde participated, there was an admission that there are many problems with the theory, and that it is unable to offer any future discoveries in science. In fact, there was a difference of opinion on whether the multiverse theory is accurate to begin with. You could detect the scope of the difference among the panellists in their facial expressions.

Similar to the theory of the multiverse is the issue of strings, which is just guesswork and an attempt at a mathematical model for the universe without any real evidence backing it up in actuality. This is why there is a wide divide in the physics community over this theory: some accept it; others reject it; others have still not decided either way. This issue was dealt with in the panel discussion, in which Neil Turok said, ‘I would answer it by saying that this claim that string theory predicts a multiverse 10^{500} or more different possible universes is based on very strong approximation. It’s very unproved. None of these universes that have been constructed – and they’ve only been partially constructed – there’s no mathematical proof they make sense...I think that’s very hard to disagree with. But none of them is a dynamical universe. Each one of them at the very least has a singularity as bad as the Big Bang singularity we’ve always talked about. And none of these who study these universes have resolved that singularity. So none of them make mathematical sense.’ Albrecht reacted by saying, ‘I’ll pick up on that. You have 10^{500} of something, but each one of these somethings is generating the multiverse on its own in this picture, and there are serious problems just with the one of those multiverses. Having 10^{500} or more doesn’t fix anything. And the problems are that you can have infinitely many pocket universes...you can’t even count them up, so you can’t tell what you are predicting which is more common than something else. And in particular, I feel the technical question is how you even do probabilities, so someone mentioned Las Vegas betting somewhere

³⁴² *God and the New Physics*, p. 174.

earlier in the evening...The way people use probabilities to cope with these multiple eternally inflating universes – you couldn't run a casino on that, they're not solid use of probabilities. Everyone's still ripping, scrambling away, trying to get it to work, just for what? Having 10^{500} is even more confusing.' Guth admitted there was what he described as a 'measure problem': 'The basic issue is that everything that can happen will happen an infinite number of times, which means that if you want to say that type of event is more common than another type of event, it's hard to compare them if they're each happening an infinite number of times. So that is a problem which I have to agree...'³⁴³

One interesting work that critiques string theory is the book by Peter Woit called *Not Even Wrong*, which is named as such since it represents the resentment this notion faces. Another book is *The Trouble With Physics* by Lee Smolin. David Berlinski has a sharp critique of the theory in his book *The Devil's Delusion*.³⁴⁴

When the *edge.org* website put its annual humorous question: 'What Scientific Idea is Ready For Retirement?', Frank Tipler replied, 'As it was in the beginning of modern science, so it should be now. We should keep the fundamental requirement that experimental confirmation is the hallmark of true science. Since string theorists have failed to propose any way to confirm string theory experimentally, string theory should be retired, today, now.'³⁴⁵

In fact, the famous atheist Lawrence Krauss is one personality that rejects this assumption. He has offered a stinging critique of the multiverse theory on a number of occasions. He has a discussion with the famous physicist Brian Greene on this subject. The wider problem with this hypothesis is that it is presented oftentimes as conclusive scientific fact and has become accepted in scientific circles. If one reads what has been written in popular science on the topic, or information that is received via documentaries or public lectures, they will notice the unequivocal language employed that defies the required scientific nuance. They present the issues they seek to disseminate to be the gospel truth, not just theories, assumptions, or mere guesswork, even though they have not been settled as such in science itself. During debates, atheist scientists leverage this to present their theories as scientific facts, as if they have been agreed upon in science. The fact is they have clung onto these estimates only because of preconceived ideological biases that push them to refuse both accepting a supermaterial creator and leaving their narrow materialistic outlook on existence.

Clifford Longley said, 'The [anthropic-design argument] and what it points to is of such an order of certainty that in any other sphere of science, it would be regarded as settled. To insist otherwise is like insisting that Shakespeare was not

³⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUW7patpm9s>

³⁴⁴ *The Devil's Delusion*, p. 121.

³⁴⁵ <https://www.edge.org/responses/what-scientific-idea-is-ready-for-retirement>

written by Shakespeare because it might have been written by a billion monkeys sitting at a billion keyboards typing for a billion years. So it might. But the sight of scientific atheists clutching at such desperate straws has put new spring in the step of theists.’³⁴⁶

3. One problem that the multiverse theory triggers is that the creation of the multiverse requires some fine-tuning. This immediately leads to the question: Who tuned the mother universe, from which the multiverse was born?

Paul Davies writes:

The multiverse theory certainly cuts the ground from beneath intelligent design, but it falls short of a complete explanation of existence. For a start, there has to be a physical mechanism to make all those universes and allocate bylaws to them. This process demands its own laws, or meta-laws. Where do they come from? The problem has simply been shifted up a level from the laws of the universe to the meta-laws of the multiverse. The root cause of all the difficulty can be traced to the fact that both religion and science appeal to some agency outside the universe to explain its lawlike order. Dumping the problem in the lap of a pre-existing designer is no explanation at all, as it merely begs the question of who designed the designer. But appealing to a host of unseen universes and a set of unexplained meta-laws is scarcely any better.³⁴⁷

The philosopher Robin Collins says, ‘In all currently worked out proposals for what this universe generator could be – such as the oscillating big bang and the vacuum fluctuation models... – the “generator” itself is governed by a complex set of laws that allow it to produce universes. It stands to reason, therefore, that if these laws were slightly different the generator probably would not be able to produce any universes that could sustain life.’³⁴⁸

Regarding inflation theory, which has been proposed as an explanation for the multiverse, Stephen Hawking said, ‘The problem is, for our theoretical models of inflation to work, the initial state of the universe had to be set up in a very special and highly improbable way. Thus traditional inflation theory resolves one set of issues but creates another...’³⁴⁹

4. The problem associated with this multiverse thought pattern is that it conditions the mind to resort to that answer whenever an

³⁴⁶ *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, p. 65.

³⁴⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jun/26/spaceexploration.comment>; see also *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 298.

³⁴⁸ *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, p. 63.

³⁴⁹ *The Grand Design*, p. 167.

inexplicable problem transpires. This is especially the case in some physics circles that have a favourable view of the multiverse by accepting the infinitely splitting universe model as proposed by Max Tegmark and others, which ultimately renders any possibility to be occurring in actuality.

Imagine a person has a bet with someone. He chooses a number on a dice, throws it, and it lands to match the number. There was a one-sixth probability of that occurring. The same number was chosen and the same result appeared when he threw the dice. They assumed the outcome is reasonable, as it happened by chance again. Now imagine that this process was repeated a hundred times and on every occasion, the dice landed on the same number – would the coincidence argument work anymore? In light of the multiverse theory, this should be perfectly possible and not surprising at all. If the person accuses the thrower of cheating, he can simply turn around and say he did not cheat at all. He could say, ‘It just so happens that we are in the universe where this was supposed to occur.’ This thought process leads us yet again – just in a more long-winded way – to the high powers of chance. No matter how remote the probability of something is, it would need to occur in one universe within the multiverse. There is nothing to stop that universe being our universe.

Based on this, whenever we are uncomfortable with the idea that something occurred by accident, even if we believe it to be so mathematically, and even if we know of the incredibly low probability of it ever occurring by chance, it should still be considered feasible and possible according to the notion that our universe was meant to host that improbable event. This is exactly the idea proposed by the pro-multiverse theorists, who use this theory to explain any improbable occurrence in our universe, without which life – according to them – would not have been possible. The mindset that accepts this metaphysical idea shuts down all routes to the possible demonstration of the existence of Allah ﷻ, because whichever proof vis-à-vis immaculate design is presented to them, it can be batted away using the stick of the infinite multiverse. As thus, what is the point in ever investigating improbable events in our universe, or making deductions from them?

Highlighting that this problem is a real issue, and that it has an impact on the entire discussion on the existence of the Divine, look at this segment from the debate between Dan Barker (atheist) and Trent Horn, titled *God: Supreme Being or Imaginary Friend?*:

Horn: Can you give us a hypothetical example of something that would falsify the statement ‘An evidence for God that does not conform to this pattern, we don’t know the explanation for x, therefore God exists’, because you said I just proposed ‘God of the

gaps' arguments. I'm curious what kind of evidence doesn't conform to this pattern. 'We don't know the explanation for what we observed x, therefore God.' Could you give us an example that does not correspond with that?

Barker: Yeah. The Bible is very clear that all things whatsoever you shall ask for in prayer believing, you shall receive. The Bible says that, and your faith is based on that book. That's pretty clear – all means all. So evidence for me would be if you were to ask God for something we couldn't possibly know. Here's a wild example. If you were to pray to God and you told me that God told you that tomorrow at 12:43:16, an asteroid from the south-south-west at an 83° angle would strike your house...

Horn: I see where you're going. What you're saying is that we don't know how you predicted how that asteroid landed there, therefore God.

Barker: I wouldn't say 'therefore God'; I would say you have some good evidence.

Horn: For what?

Barker: For this God you believe in.

Horn: But how would you know it isn't something natural we haven't discovered yet?

Barker: Because how would you explain it?

Horn: How would you explain it!? I don't know! How would you explain it!?

Barker: If you're asking for evidence, you would need something like that...

(A few moments later)

Horn: I guess I have something interesting with the multiverse. You said it could be infinite.

Barker: No. We know that it is at least one. That is all we know right now.

Horn: Alright, because you need a lot of universes right? It can't just be a billion because that won't give you huge numbers. But if it was infinite, here's the problem. In infinite multiverse, will there be one universe where you naturally predict a meteor strike?

Barker: There would be a universe in which someone would get struck, that's right.

Horn: So there would be no way to know if it was God or if you're just in the multiverse?

Barker: But I would accept it as evidence in that universe.

Horn: But how do you know it's God and you're not in the infinite multiverse?

Barker: In that case, I would just say I would accept that as an evidence for God, it might be wrong – not as proof – but I would accept it as evidence in that universe.³⁵⁰

This discussion reveals the scale of the problem. Imagine if one of these atheists who believe in the infinite multiverse and that all possibilities one can envisage are represented in the multiverse, and he witnessed a miracle of God that occurred at the hand of one of His Prophets. In response, he would immediately retort, 'I don't know. Perhaps it occurred as an accident because I was in the universe where this accident occurred.' What was quite remarkable was that Barker admitted – in spite of pressure from self-evident truths and what his own *fitrah* would have been telling him – that what he mentioned was enough to convince himself. This is notwithstanding the fact that his probabilities – in my estimation – are numerically far more than the probabilities of those universe standards and constants being set in place by an external entity.

In critiquing the multiverse theory, David Berlinski said, 'There are universes in which the electron continues to follow some law, and those in which it does not. In a Landscape in which anything is possible, nothing is necessary. In a universe in which nothing is necessary, anything is possible.'³⁵¹

5. So long as their claim is based on guesswork, where then would the processing of the differences between the multiverse stop at? Why should we limit ourselves to, for example, the differences between their constants? Why can there not be variation in the laws of physics as well? Why can this difference not be inside the particles of those universes? In fact, why is the process not regularised across the board and the entire raft of probabilities vis-à-vis difference is opened up for debate?

This has actually been proposed in, for example, the model offered by Max Tegmark, namely that there are repetitions of ourselves in each universe we can possibly be in, as well as multiple universes in accordance with each possibility in our lives and each choice we can make. This means that the most belligerent of atheists in this universe would be a Muslim theist in another universe, a Christian in another, an apostate from Islam in another, a claimant of divinity in another, a

³⁵⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nC99sCxFe

³⁵¹ *The Devil's Delusion*, p. 133.

crazed madman in another, and so on. This situation resembles a sci-fi movie more than it does reality; in fact, it is exactly that. Alan Guth, Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and pioneer of cosmic inflation theory, said, ‘Essentially anything that can happen does happen in one of the alternatives which means that superimposed on top of the Universe that we know of is an alternative universe where Al Gore is President and Elvis Presley is still alive.’³⁵² Elsewhere, he said, ‘In a single universe, cows born with two heads are rarer than cows born with one head’. But in an infinitely branching multiverse, ‘there are an infinite number of one-headed cows and an infinite number of two-headed cows. What happens to the ratio?’³⁵³

Vexed by this idea, Paul Davies said, ‘But even if you need not fear an encounter with a duplicate you, the very notion that there could be not just one, but an infinity of identical copies of you, leading identical lives (and infinitely many others leading similar but not identical lives) is deeply unsettling. Even Tegmark admits that his gut reaction is to find the idea “strange and implausible.”’³⁵⁴

What shines a light on these people getting carried away with this sort of ‘hypothetical physics’ behaviour is that some scientists have started to think seriously about the following question: Are we connected with our minds to a universal communication tool that allows us to live in a virtual world though our consciousness? Or are we interacting with actual objective reality? Is our state like the one described in the famous American movie *The Matrix*?

Paul Davies mentioned that one implication of accepting the infinite multiverse is one would accept fictitious universes that give the illusion that they are actual universes. This obviously leads to the problem of how probable it is for us to ascertain that the universe that we live in is real and not fictitious or virtual.³⁵⁵ In fact, we can take the idea of the virtual world further, because some actually do say that we ourselves are simply virtual beings, and that we do not have any real actual existence but are rather the result of a programmer who programmed us on his/its computer, and placed us in this virtual world through his/its computer. He/It programmed us in such a way that we feel we exist without ever knowing that what is around is not real. This ‘position’ would make our existence like an evolved version of the PC game *The Sims* that adolescents play, where advanced civilisations are built on computers from the comfort of their bedrooms. It is therefore quite surprising to see that New Atheists believe these sorts of fantasies to be more rational than believing in a Lord Who created.

³⁵² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2001/parallelunitrans.shtml>

³⁵³ <https://www.quantamagazine.org/the-multiverses-measure-problem-20141103/>

³⁵⁴ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 202.

³⁵⁵ *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p. 203.

Even though New Atheists do not explicitly state that we are living in a Sims-like world, they nonetheless cannot falsify it and in fact consider this game-like experience to be congruent with scientific knowledge. The door for them is open to these sorts of ideas. This uncovers the great danger of getting carried away with any and every wild idea or fantasy that the mind can conjure up. It also highlights the very high price man pays – his humanity itself – when dabbling with these sorts of thoughts. Such thoughts can take a person down a rabbit hole and force him to adopt endless sophistry at the price of actual cognition and knowledge. In fact, it renders his entire life into a pointless mess of nihilism, irrationality, and chaos. No aspect of his life would ever be free from such meaninglessness. For example, ethics would have no point in a virtual world – would a virtual life possess any real value that would stop a person from violating ethics?³⁵⁶ It is indeed a strange proposition. What is disconcerting is that many atheists are, on *these* issues, prepared to jump into the believers' category, all to save themselves from acknowledging their Lord and Creator. When man does not hold fast onto what he knows from his own rational self-instincts, and his innate and necessary feelings, he would no doubt slip up at these doubts and fantasies. This is why I consider it incumbent for a person to adhere to the instinctive and innate imprints on one's soul, and to make that the blueprint by which one lives. If someone ignores that blueprint or tears it up, the price for such a deed would be extremely high – it will quite literally cost him everything. On the sophistic questions, causes, and their link with the truth and its evidence, Ibn Taymiyyah offers this brief yet graceful passage: 'Realise that there is no truth or evidence that cannot be subject to sophistic doubts. Sophism is either about a corrupted mind or obstinance from accepting the truth. Neither have a rule to pin them down; rather, it would always be down to the corrupt fantasies and stubborn denials of the truth that come into the souls.'³⁵⁷ He spoke the truth indeed, ﷺ.

6. This idea offers an overly difficult solution in interpreting the cause of composition and complexity in our universe. This contradicts Occam's Razor, the famous scientific problem-solving concept, which means that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity, or that the simplest explanation is usually the best one. It would therefore seem to be absurd to claim a huge or infinite number of universes to explain one universe.

What is interesting is that in *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins says, 'The multiverse may seem extravagant in sheer number of universes. But if each one of those universes is simple in its fundamental laws, we are still not postulating

³⁵⁶ Translator's note: The lack of ethics and morality in the virtual world is alluded to in movies such as *Minority Report*.

³⁵⁷ *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, p. 60.

anything highly improbable.’³⁵⁸ If each universe is really simple as he says, and given that our universe is obviously part of that multiverse, then what was the need to claim the multiverse just to explain our simple universe? This is because each universe in the infinite series of universes would not be simple, but rather complex. Each would require its own explanation. Therefore, to offer the multiverse as an explanation for our universe is absolutely pointless. This is especially given Dawkins’s insistence that they are not complex in the way that led Paul Davies and others to seek a clarification on the nature of the operation that results in the creation of multiple universes, which would also be in need of some degree of fine-tuning. In addition, let us assume that each universe in its own right is simple – would it then be correct to say that the multiverse *in toto* is not complex?

Imagine there is a large machine. Each constituent part of the machine is simple. When these parts are put together to form the machine, would it be proper to claim that because these parts are simple, the machine is also simple? Imagine if a person claimed that man with all his living limbs is simple, because if we reduce him to his basic elements, we can say that these basic parts are simple, and therefore man is simple. It is clear that there is a fundamental error here. Obviously, his statement, ‘if each one of those universes is simple in its fundamental laws, we are still not postulating anything highly improbable’ does not make much sense. What exactly is the scope of probability being compared to here? How can he know how probable the infinite multiverse theory is compared to the single universe?

These are some of the objections to the multiverse theory and its suitability in explaining the phenomenon of mastery and consummate construction of the universe. Enthusiasts of this issue should avail themselves of the following books in order to learn further objections: *The Goldilocks Enigma*, *Big Bang*, *Big God: A Universe Fit for Life?*, *The Devil’s Delusion*, *God’s Undertaker*, *God and Design*, *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, and others.

Third objection: Man’s masterful making is his deed; it is improper to consider mastery in nature analogous to man-made mastery

This objection is based on analogising the manifestations of mastery proving they constitute the doing of an Omniscient and Willing Doer to that of man’s deeds. As theists, when we see something in nature that is masterfully made, it would automatically come into our minds that this was the making of a doer. If we are unable to ascribe this making to a human, we would automatically ascribe it to some other doer. This objection states that this analogy is incorrect. Our observation of man’s masterful work is what suggests to us that his making is to

³⁵⁸ *The God Delusion*, p. 147.

be ascribed to him. As for nature and the universe, we have not seen how they were made, nor did we see how the manifestations of mastery took shape therein. Therefore, we cannot pass judgement on what we were not there to witness.

Though this objection is relatively ancient, the one who systemised it is David Hume via his typical scepticism vis-à-vis the principle of causality. This scepticism has been imbibed by atheist thought to a large degree, giving rise to a plethora of problems. Hume commented extensively on this objection, especially in his book *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The presence of this objection among atheists has become increasingly conspicuous, especially when they debate proponents of intelligent design or creationists.

They claim that masterful construction in itself does not necessarily mean that a selective maker exists. This delusion that we sense in ourselves comes from observing the masterful makings of man, so it appeared to our minds that the will of a doer is the cause of mastery. This is a *non sequitur*. This is why we find one angle of objection made on Paley's famous watchmaker argument to be that it is improper to analogise mastery in the universe to mastery in a watch. Though the construct of a watch is from a willing maker, this does not have to be the case for the universe. The most that can be said is that some manifestations of mastery can be ascribed to a doer – with the condition that it be as a result of observation and induction. Our judgement that watches have a maker is based on seeing the first watch being made, the second watch being made, and so on. As for the universe, we cannot see or comprehend that it has a maker, let alone comprehend that the maker may have made a second or third universe. Therefore, it is not proper to jump to this sort of conclusion – i.e., that the universe has a maker – based on the fact that both the universe and watches are masterfully constructed.

This objection surfaced during the debate between Dr. 'Amr Sharīf and Bassām al-Baghdādī on the *Misr 25* satellite channel, moderated by Eng. Fāḍil Sulaymān over three episodes. Eng. Fāḍil picked up a glass in his hand and asked Bassām,

There is this glass in front of you. Is its existence not evidence for the existence of a maker who made this glass?'

Bassām: We know that this cup exists and we know the factory that manufactured it. Have you seen what made the universe that we are in? Have you seen other universes to compare this one to them?

Eng. Fāḍil: No – you have not understood my question. I am asking you, Bassām, that if you do not know the factory in which it was manufactured, would the mere existence of the glass still not be evidence that it has a maker?

Bassām: Well, of course not!³⁵⁹

This reveals the yawning chasm between atheists and theists in the epistemology of theology. The cause of this difference is that theists rely on the self-evident, *fiṭrah*-driven concept of causality, whereas the atheists deny this principle and make it an issue of inductive reasoning. The problem is that it is part and parcel of an inductive reasoning process that can sometimes not work; in fact, in atheist philosophy, something can come out of nothing; therefore, even in the watch example, a man can use the same polemic and say, ‘The fact that watch X has a maker, watch Y has a maker, and watch Z has a maker does not mean that watches A, B, and C also have a maker.’ This is exactly what many atheists inferred from David Hume’s words and took ownership of its theory, even though in practice they are compelled to adhere to what their own *fiṭrah* dictates to them.

I will not repeat what has been already reiterated about the danger the denial of the principle of causality has on human cognition and the multiple epistemic problems it leads to, leaving even the atheist unable to escape them. In fact, atheists are unable to adhere to their view in practice. It is utterly arbitrary to dispense with this principle on the excuse that sense experience and induction alone will suffice. This would truly be the gateway to ultimate scepticism, not only in this issue, but in all knowledge. It is methodologically incorrect here to be duped into thinking that the view of theists was negotiated by some form of like-for-like analogy. The fact is this was not an analogy to start with, but rather the general application of the instinctive and rational concept that dictates that merely noting something’s masterful construct would denote that there is a willing and omniscient Doer behind it. This is the case even if it is assumed that we do not know the exact nature of this Doer and the attributes He possesses.

Here is some further information relevant to the nature of this objection:

1. Imagine we come across something that is constructed, and we know that man has made something like it or something similar to it. Can we believe that this constructed item too is from the makings of man? Would it not be possible that this specific item could have been made by another entity? If the answer is in the affirmative, then does our lack of knowledge of the nature of this item make it proper for us to reject that this was made? Do we have the power to comprehend that there must have been a designer for this item, even if we do not know the precise nature of this designer? I would believe that an atheist would stick to the line that Bassām held, which is the theoretical denial of this issue. This is extremely problematic. Imagine we found a watch on

³⁵⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiGY3xj-_rY&t=660s

Translator’s note: This channel was shut down when Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took control of Egypt.

another planet – will we say that this watch denotes that man has reached that planet? Shall we say at the very least that a choosing maker reached that planet? Or do we say that we do not know of any man who has reached this planet? Based on this, can we not claim that this watch has a designer? I would expect an atheist's answer to be strange indeed when assessed by our cognitive and innate understandings.

2. The fact is that atheists do not – in practice – adhere to their own theoretical assumptions that they aver in the context of casting objections against the existence of Allah. What further underscores this problem is that scientists adhere to the foundation of masterful construct in multiple cognitive fields as a tool that reveals the existence of a choosing doer. NASA's (now defunct) project SETI was founded precisely on this idea, which was the search for signals of intelligent extraterrestrial life. The project assumes that we can filter out intercepted signals, and that we can understand what is random and deterministic versus what came from a choosing doer. Imagine if we picked up a real and unique signal – could we then claim that this was random or accidental because it is something we are unaware of? Could we really have given the excuse that this signal does not in any way reveal the existence of the one who sent those signals? The fact that these merely resemble man-made signals should not validate for us the belief that aliens sent those signals. We have not seen any life beings in space that would have sent these sorts of signals for us to pass judgement. I believe this is the scientific stance to adopt, though I do believe that the atheist methodology of denying the teleological argument in favour of the Creator operates in the same way.

Objections to the conclusion: 'God is the One Who created the world in this solid and masterful manner'

First objection: Who set the standards?

The person I have heard repeating this objection the most is Richard Dawkins. This objection forms the central argument in his book *The God Delusion*. In brief, this objection states that if God is the One Who set the standards of the universe, then who set those standards in the first place? In other words, if God created the universe in the consummate manner that He did, then who created God?

At its core, this objection is based on the famous atheist question – 'Who created God?' We have discussed it in detail, in the section of the argument from

creation that denotes the existence of Allah ﷻ. It contains answers to many elements of this objection.

The nature of this objection that Dawkins raises is in fact an evolved version of the objection that he adopted elsewhere, which was his objection to the argument from the systematic nature of the universe and its masterful construct. If the question ‘Who created God?’ is a central objection to the argument from creation, then a central objection to the argument from the systematic nature of the universe and its masterful making is ‘Who tuned the Tuner?’ and ‘Who designed the Designer?’ This evolution in the argument carries an additional objection on top of the ‘Who created God?’ question, as Richard Dawkins puts it: ‘God, or any intelligent, decision-taking, calculating agent, would have to be highly improbable in the very same statistical sense as the entities he is supposed to explain.’³⁶⁰ The point he wants to make from this objection is that if we want an explanation for the composition and complexity that is present in the masterful construct of Allah, then Allah Himself is far more composite and more complicated than the universe; therefore, we are only adding further complexity by assuming that Allah exists as a solution to the problem that is less complicated than the proposal that He exists.

Dawkins landed himself into a number of dangerous errors:

1. It is clear that Dawkins operates from a corporealist conceptualisation of God, in which he assumes that the Creator should be of the same genus of this created world. This is why he is prepared to depict God with ambiguous phrases such as ‘composite’ and ‘complex’, when in fact God is far above this material existence. There is absolutely no comparison between His essence and the rest of His creation, as Allah says of Himself: ‘There is nothing like Him, for He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.’³⁶¹
2. Dawkins commits a comical error where he thinks that introducing God as an answer to the question of the systematic nature of the universe and its masterful making is a composite and complex answer. This is not the case at all; in fact, it is the most obvious and simplest of all answers. It appears that Dawkins has conflated two issues:
 - a. That which is in relation to the essence and entity of God.
 - b. That which is a plausible explanation for the phenomenon under discussion.

³⁶⁰ *The God Delusion*, p. 147.

³⁶¹ *Al-Shūrā*, 11.

It might be the case that the entity that is being explained is complex in and of itself. However, in spite of that, it is still the best possible explanation for the phenomenon. Take this as an example: A man goes into a cave and finds writings or inscriptions etched into its walls. His mind immediately thinks that there must have been someone who lived in this cave and wrote those writings and sketched those drawings. Is this not a rational answer that does not comprise of any complexity? We can still accept that the actual person who etched those writings or drawings is more complex to pinpoint and identify than the suggestion that these etchings are from *a* person.

3. The previous issue underscores that most people believe in the existence of God. This suggests that for the universe's masterful making God is the most obvious, easiest, and acceptable answer according to most humans, as opposed to the concept supported by Dawkins, who claims that this answer brings about further complexity. Had that been the case, most of humankind would not have reached the theist conclusion. It is this answer, with its simplicity and innateness to humans, that led to its spread on a mass scale.
4. This underscores that whenever a suitable answer is found to a question, it is not necessary that people abandon it just because they were confronted by a new objection. In the previous example, imagine that a person rejected that there was a person who etched those writings in the wall of the cave just because he does not know his name, which tribe he came from, when he was alive, when he was in the cave, and so on. Would such an attitude be acceptable?
5. The view adopted by Dawkins to deal with the problem is in reality far more complex than the answer offered by theists to deal with the question of the universe's masterful making. Dawkins proposes the multiverse as an answer to the question. There is no doubt that to suffice on one entity to answer the question is superior to the assumption of a huge, possibly infinite, number of entities. It is interesting that Dawkins believes that his choice of answer in solving the question is the simpler option and more plausible. In my estimation, this is sheer obstinance on his part – he is clearly motivated by a materialistic outlook that is propelled by his preconceived bias. He believes that it is more plausible that some adolescent teen living in a higher human civilisation made us through an advanced computer programme and created these virtual worlds for us, which means that we are

mere virtual beings without any real existence. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that he has these biases against the idea of faith in the existence of God, which happens to be far more congruent with human nature, human predisposition, human knowledge, and human partiality to religiosity. Denying these bases leads to the complete destabilisation of the fundamentals upon which knowledge, science, and a coherent moral philosophy are founded. In fact, without affirming His existence, there is no credible alternative for us to acknowledge that we as human beings are objectively present and are in existence.

Second objection: The systematic nature of the universe and its masterful making, as proof for theism, does not determine that the Creator is actually God

In brief, the thought process behind this objection is this: ‘Assuming, *arguendo*, that the proof does indeed point to the existence of a willing doer that made the world in the masterful manner that we see, who told you that it is God?’

This objection was dismantled when we discussed the argument from creation. The actual point of contention with atheists is whether the universe was created by a willing doer or not. If it is affirmed that this entity exists, it would be possible to safely assume that it is Allah, and that the argument from the systematic nature of the universe is indicative of some of Allah’s attributes. In fact, the evidence for this is extremely clear, for it guides us to the fact that this willing doer has the characteristics of will, power, knowledge, wisdom, life, mercy, and other attributes that are typically associated with Allah.

I conclude this point by clarifying the nature of atheist logic when dealing with these types of issues by pointing out that they are composed in such a complex manner that disallows atheists from ever considering any argument in support of the existence of Allah. One Arab atheist states that had he even seen God and embraced Him, that would still not prove that He is the Creator of the universe; were He to create something in front of us, ‘that would still not be proof that He created me’. That is the type of stubbornness that reveals the chasm between us and them, which is virtually impossible to be bridged when discussing this topic with these types of people. After all, guidance is in the Hand of Allah ﷻ – He guides whom He wishes and He leads astray whom He wishes.

And with this final objection, we end this section and come to the conclusion of the book.

CONCLUSION

Allow me to pick up from where I left off in my book, 'The Atheist Militia'...

In 1966, the American news magazine *Time* published a cover story titled *Is God Dead?* The reason for this provocative title was a strong sentiment that the sciences and their superior explanatory powers were in the ascendency, leading to the abandonment of the existence of God as an explanation for phenomena and the masterful nature of the universe. The paradox was that even though the sciences were on the rise, there was an increasing number of cases of people stating their need for the Lord – during their daily living, work, and professional environment. During that same year, the famous astronomer Carl Sagan announced two fundamental components for the existence of a planet that is habitable:

1. The presence of an appropriate type of star.
2. A planet at an appropriate distance from the star.

That is all. When we understand that the number of stars in the known universe is more than one octillion ($10^{27} = 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000$), then the number of habitable planets should be a septillion ($10^{24} = 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000$). This gigantic number of habitable planets triggered massive hope within the scientific community that humankind was on the cusp of finding life somewhere in the wide universe. As such, Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) was founded, with huge sums of money dedicated to the project, matched only by the huge expectation of finding life in the wider cosmos. For a long time, scientists tried to look out for any sign of life in space. However, space was silent. It remained silent until Congress shut down the project in 1993. Private companies took the mantle and continued their search for life beyond Earth. To this day, space remains silent and has not uttered even a letter. What happened?

In a nutshell, what happened was that, in spite of our advanced knowledge and science, we found that there are more components to life than the two elements mentioned by Sagan. We discovered that a habitable planet for any sort of life – let alone intelligent life – is more complicated than was first thought. The required parameters increased from two to ten, then to twenty, then to fifty...and it goes on. The number of potentially habitable planets dramatically decreased, and it continues to decrease to this day. Peter Schenkel, a supporter of the SETI project, wrote the following in an article that was published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, 'Early SETI efforts were marked by overly optimistic estimates of the

probable number of extraterrestrial civilizations in our galaxy. In light of new findings and insights, it seems appropriate to put excessive euphoria to rest and to take a more down-to-Earth view. Earth may be more special, and intelligence much rarer, in the universe than previously thought.’ He added: ‘In light of new findings and insights, it seems appropriate to put excessive euphoria to rest... We should quietly admit that the early estimates... may no longer be tenable.’³⁶²

In brief, we have more than 200 parameters today for a planet to be considered habitable. Each parameter must perfectly meet a stringent set of criteria; otherwise the habitability of the planet would collapse in totality:

- There must be a large planet nearby, to the tune of Jupiter, which pulls away meteors and protects the candidate planet; otherwise the candidate planet would become a target for meteors and life would be destroyed.
- The size of the candidate planet must be appropriate. If it is too big, its gravitational pull would be too strong, which would pull in toxic ammonia and methane gas. If it is too small, its gravitational pull would be too weak and would negatively impact the amount of water there.
- The size of its moon must also be appropriate. Our Moon protects the rotation and orbit of the Earth. Were it not for the Moon, the axis of Earth would tilt far beyond its normal tilt and the desired stability would be lost.
- The ozone layer of the candidate planet must be suitable. If it is too thick, it would impact the amount of oxygen in its atmosphere. If it is too light, volcanic activity and earthquakes would frequent the planetary surface.

These facts and others have revealed that our existence on this planet is truly a miracle. The possibilities of life not succeeding anywhere in the universe appear to be extremely high, compared to the possibility of its success. Yet here we are; in fact, we are speaking about this phenomenon right now. How did that happen? Was it all a coincidence? To what extent can we rely on the coincidence argument? When can we start to safely assume that the coincidence theory is implausible?

Leave aside everything that has preceded. The complexities of having a habitable planet can never be compared to the complexities in the very existence of the universe. All the cosmic forces (gravity, electromagnetic force, the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force) have been measured to one millionth of a second after the Big Bang. Any foul play in these forces in relation to each other

³⁶² <https://cdn.centerforinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2006/05/22164609/p26.pdf>

– even by the very slightest – would lead to the collapse of the entire system of the universe:

- If the strong nuclear force and the electromagnetic force were to become imbalanced by even a hair's breadth, the stars and the multitude of chemical elements would not have formed.
- If the gravitational force was strengthened by even the slightest amount, the universe would have immediately contracted after the Big Bang. If it was made slightly weaker, matter in the universe would have scattered indefinitely, resulting in no galaxies, stars, and planets being formed.

One only has to look at the cosmological constant and its extreme precision that has left everyone bewildered – even atheists. The unbiased mind would instinctively rule that the existence of all these conditions by sheer coincidence is impossible, and that there is a special providence behind the astonishing orderly construct of the universe. The idea that all of this cosmic data came about as a result of coincidence is just like tossing a coin and having it come up as heads 10 quintillion times in a row. Can this really be ascribed to coincidence? The atheist astronomer

Fred Hoyle said, 'Nothing has shaken my atheism as much as this discovery.' At the end of his life he wrote, 'A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.' Theoretical physicist Paul Davies has said that 'the appearance of design is overwhelming'. The uncompromising atheist Christopher Hitchens said, 'Without question the fine-tuning argument was the most powerful argument of the other side.' The theist mathematician John Lennox said, 'The more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator...gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here.'³⁶³

However, is the existence of Allah merely an assumption, and simply just the best explanation out there for the universe? Of course not. The aforementioned rational proofs are definitive and conclusive. They emphasise and reveal the requirement of *fitrah* that Allah ﷻ placed in the hearts of His servants. So long as man does not accept what his *fitrah* tells him and does not submit to it, he will lose everything – his knowledge, his cognition, his will, and in fact his humanity. Nothing has meaning without His existence. Man and the world with everything in it are dependent on Him. Purpose is drawn from Him. Without Him, our universe would drown in the darkness of purposelessness.

³⁶³ All information in this concluding chapter have been taken from the 2014 *WSJ* article *Science Increasingly Makes the Case for God* by Eric Metaxas. He also has an interesting short video clip on this.

Moonlight can disappear. Sunlight can be extinguished. The light across existence in the universe can die. But His light? Never.

Appendix

GALAXIES ARE LADDERS TO FAITH

By Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Umar al-Sakrān

All praise is for Allah. As to what follows:

In the mid-20th century, the English astrophysicist James Jeans (d. 1946) became extremely famous in England. Jeans used to travel between Oxford and Princeton for his academic duties. At Princeton, he was Professor of Applied Mathematics. He has a number of key contributions in the fields of physics and astronomy, especially in relation to radiation and stellar evolution. He critiqued Laplace’s theory on the formulation of the solar system and proposed an alternate theory.

A number of scientific discoveries have been named after Jeans, such as the Rayleigh-Jeans law, which he refined. The Rayleigh-Jeans law is an approximation of the spectral radiance of electromagnetic radiation. Another discovery named after him is the Jeans mass, which relates to the birth of stars. It considers the process of gravitational collapse within a gaseous cloud, which leads to the formation of a star. A lunar crater was also named after him. Likewise, a Martian crater was named after him.

Any person reading the intellectual life of James Jeans would immediately notice that he was at the frontier of cosmology and physics, as the two disciplines have merged to a great extent in recent time. Many cosmologists are physicists and vice versa. This is why the American astronomer Lloyd Motz (d. 2004) stated in his book *The Story of Physics*, ‘We make no apology for including Greek astronomy in our story of physics because astronomy today, more than ever in the past, is accepted as a branch of physics. We need only consider the interrelationships between high-energy physics and cosmology, stellar evolution, and nuclear physics or those between the structure of galaxies and hydrodynamics to see how closely these two branches of knowledge are related. In a sense, the story of physics properly begins with Greek astronomy, because the Greeks were the first to try to understand and explain the movements of the stars and planets in the evening sky.’³⁶⁴

It is not difficult to grasp or explain the cause for this overlap between astronomy and physics, which Motz and his colleague allude to in this passage. Astronomy deals with celestial bodies; physics studies movement, matter, and

³⁶⁴ *The Story of Physics*, p. 25.

energy in time and space. It is natural that physics would study the movement and behaviour of these bodies. This is how physicists would find themselves becoming astronomers, and astronomers becoming physicists.

James Jeans did not suffice with writing specialist proposals. Rather, he ascribed himself to a group of specialists who believed in the importance of simplifying the natural sciences for public audiences. Likewise, the British physicist Stephen Hawking wrote his book *A Brief History of Time*, in which he laid out the foundations of universal cosmology – over 10 million copies of this book were sold and it was translated to multiple global languages. These sorts of writings that address the public reader afford authors a great deal of fame in the media for becoming commentators of the scientific revolution in their respective eras. James Jeans played the same role, especially in the field of cosmology, which happens to be an extremely interesting and thought-provoking subject to the readership of the wider public.

James Jeans is ascribed to the movement that downgrades philosophy in terms of priority, compared to the natural sciences. He believes that philosophy follows the lead of the natural sciences, which are at the forefront of discovery and innovation, in the sense that philosophy only follows up on what has been already discovered by science. According to this movement, philosophy is merely an explanation that comes after the development of science. Jeans says, ‘The philosophy of any period is always largely interwoven with the science of the period, so that any fundamental change in science must produce reactions in philosophy.’³⁶⁵

This somewhat degrading assessment of philosophy, compared to placing the natural sciences on a pedestal, is not the invention of James Jeans. It is in fact a popular viewpoint in Western thought and is widespread among those in the empirical field. It is possible to find an acknowledgement of philosophy playing second fiddle to the sciences in how the leading German philosopher, Hegel (d. 1831), described philosophy. In the end of his introduction to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, he said, ‘The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk.’³⁶⁶ Minerva is the goddess of wisdom and philosophy in Roman mythology. She had an owl; in their concept, the owl was a symbol of wisdom for its patience and silence throughout the day, and because it chooses uninhabited places. What Hegel meant by this metaphor was that philosophy does not start to operate until the events of the day conclude – it can only follow those events, and it only serves to explain them. What this metaphor therefore means is that philosophy is merely a hermeneutical tool, not the creator of events.

³⁶⁵ *Physics and Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1943, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, p. xxi.

There are many other testimonies in Western thought that relegate the importance of philosophy and magnify the natural sciences and their conclusions in medicine, technology, and other areas. This is not the place to expound on that. This is why you see America, for example, which is the vanguard of the sciences and technology, lagging behind in terms of the number of philosophers it produces. On the other hand, Europe, which has fallen behind America, has proportionately a larger number of philosophers. Granville Stanley Hall, an American psychologist, assessed the state of philosophy in America with the following words: ‘Philosophers in America are as rare as snakes in Norway.’³⁶⁷ Hall explained this phenomenon by linking it to the age of the nation, and the nature of jobs and business investments made therein.

One of the most important books written by James Jeans is *Physics and Philosophy*. It is a comparative study between the method of physicists and their scientific output, and the method of philosophers and their output. In his book, Jeans attempts to prove his viewpoint in detail, which is that the output of philosophers is meagre compared to that of physicists. There are a number of striking details in it. For example, he commented on Kant’s theory and analysed how useful it is, concluding that it did not offer anything significant. He then attempted to switch philosophy to a new thought method in light of the conclusions of physics, such as the concepts of causality, free will, and others.

When a researcher places Jeans in his historical context, he will be able to comprehend precisely the dimensions of this proposal. Jeans’s *Physics and Philosophy* was born during the era of the scientific revolution, when social life had shifted based on new technologies, discoveries, and innovations that were woven into the fabric of people’s lives. This was the toughest period that philosophy ever endured, known as ‘the fundamental problem of philosophy’. Many scholars – especially empiricists – started asking whether there was any point to philosophy, and questioned whether it had contributed anything meaningful.

One of the most significant proposals that attempted to study this phenomenon and refute its opponents is the article by the English philosopher, Bernard Williams (d. 2003), called ‘On Hating and Despising Philosophy’. He starts off the piece by saying, ‘As long as there has been such a subject as philosophy, there have been people who hated and despised it.’ The key observation offered by Williams is the following: ‘These days, most of those who take this kind of attitude to philosophy are not religious, but scientists, or – more typically – fellow-travellers of science, and they take it not in the name of religion but in the interest of an anti-philosophical and confidently puritanical view of science.’³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ *Philosophy in the United States*, *Mind* magazine, p. 95.

³⁶⁸ ‘On Hating and Despising Philosophy,’ *London Book Review*, 1996, p. 16.

Naturally, Williams was not pleased with this situation. He wrote this article to refute the view that denigrated philosophy after the scientific revolution.

The phenomenon of mocking philosophy and magnifying the importance of science is extremely widespread among the Western scientific community. This leads us to the following question: Why is it the case that a generation of Western-influenced and educated Arab youth are quite commonly reading the Western philosophers of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, but are not as strong when it comes to developing their knowledge in science? This requires some analysis and introspection. I will attempt to offer an explanation for it.

In my estimation, this generation of Arab youth reads the works of Arab philosophers who had studied philosophy in the West, but they did not read the Arab scientists. As a result, the Arab philosophers led them to the Western philosophical tradition, causing them to think that the advancement of the West is a result of Western philosophy. This result was natural and inevitable, given that the Arab thinkers offered what they had. This is also why we witness a generation of Arab youth who are officially studying medicine, engineering, and the sciences spending their free time reading the philosophers of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, instead of disseminating modern science in their countries. This is indeed both a strange and a pitiful sight. Those qualified in the sciences – which our society is in desperate need of – also happen to be avid readers who are refusing to help our society progress, and are instead digging into premodern Western history. Readers can follow our articles on philosophy in regional journals, or in the circles of philosophy in our private groups. What one can notice is that most Western symbols of philosophy that are prevalent in our Arab discourse are part of philosophy's 'old guard', not the contemporary flagbearers of philosophy or the most recent and contemporary renditions of the subject.

A keen observer of the state of Arab and regional philosophy will notice that the symbols of philosophy that dominate their discourses are from the 16th century (Luther), 17th century (Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes), 18th century (John Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant), 19th century (Bentham, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Spencer, Nietzsche), and others. A reader would know that contemporary knowledge has progressed in leaps and bounds – it is far beyond the conceptualisations of the philosophers who lived before the era of mass technology.

This is why it is feasible to suggest that this generation of youth, which has abandoned the study of the religion and instead taken it upon itself to read premodern Western philosophy – duped into believing that it has switched from the ancient past to modernity – has merely switched from one tradition to another. As these youth label religious texts as 'yellow books', we point out that they merely switched from 'Eastern yellow books' to 'Western yellow books'. To use their own expression, they are still in a world of yellowness.

However, what made the cultured Arab youth turn to the books of Western philosophy and abandon the books of Arab science? Perhaps it can be explained by the duet of the propagation of the Arab philosophers and the lackadaisical approach of Arab scientists vis-à-vis simplifying the sciences to the public readership. It can perhaps also be explained by the fact that science requires money, labs, equipment, and financing for scientific research, whereas a man writing on philosophy – which is solely a mental endeavour – can do so in his own room. Because the Arab political regimes have neglected funding for science, minds have turned to philosophy to compensate. Whatever the case may be, we were led into this tangential discussion on the state of Western thought by James Jeans's denigration of philosophy and magnification of science in his book *Physics and Philosophy*.

The point of this discussion is to briefly introduce readers to James Jeans, the astrophysicist. It is a prelude to an important conversation between him and another person – the Pakistani mathematician, 'Ināyatullāh Mashriqī.

'Ināyatullāh Mashriqī (d. 1963) was famed for his passion for mathematics. He completed his Masters in the subject when he was 19 years old, breaking all records set before him. In the same year of his graduation (1907), he travelled to Britain so he could continue his studies in mathematics at Cambridge. During his time there, he concluded a number of specialist studies, in conjunction with studying Oriental languages and the sciences. He stayed in Cambridge for five years until 1912, when he travelled back to India.

When 'Ināyatullāh Mashriqī reached his thirties, he had an idea of writing an explanation of the Qur'an in light of modern scientific discoveries – a task that he embarked on and completed. He finished the first volume when he was 36 years old, in 1924, naming it *Tazkirah*. Attention drew towards him and he was provisionally nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, though the Nobel Committee stipulated for it to be translated into a European language, causing him to refuse to accept the award. He said, 'I do not wish to receive an award that does not acknowledge my Urdu language.' Even though he specialised in a number of fields in Cambridge and any such translation project could have been easily commissioned, his self-worth as an Indian scholar took precedence.

'Ināyatullāh Mashriqī entered politics, where he assumed a number of governmental roles. Then he went independent and founded a political party called the Khaksar Movement. He also founded a weekly newspaper, called *Iṣlāh*. In addition, he was jailed numerous times. Unfortunately, the picture is not as rosy as it seems. Mashriqī had a number of misconceptions regarding the prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*), the impact of different prophethoods on legislation, the Islamic theory of hermeneutics, and other areas. For more on the personality of 'Ināyatullāh Mashriqī and his role, refer to the book *Allama Inayatullah Mashraqi*

by Muhammad Mālik, published in Oxford. Note that the book focuses more on his political career.

Now to the core issue, which is to compare the two personalities: the English astrophysicist James Jeans, and the Indian-Pakistani mathematician ‘Ināyatullāh Mashriqī. At the same time that ‘Ināyatullāh Mashriqī was at Cambridge to further his studies in maths, he met James Jeans, who was teaching at the university. They came to know each other. ‘Ināyatullāh Mashriqī relates a story that transpired between them. This story was published by the Nuqoosh magazine in Pakistan, in a special edition dedicated to ‘Ināyatullāh Mashriqī’s life. From there, it was copied by the Indian scholar Waḥīduddīn Khān in his book *God Arises: Evidence of God in Nature and in Science*. In the introduction, he mentioned that the phrase ‘God Arises’ is taken from a verse in the Bible.

Let us turn to this lengthy discussion. Waḥīduddīn Khān says,

To sum up, here is an incident which occurred in England, as related by Inayat-ullah Mashriqi: “It was Sunday”, he writes, “the year 1909. It was raining hard. I had gone out on some errand when I saw the famous Cambridge University astronomer, Sir James Jeans, with a Bible clutched under his arm, on his way to Church. Coming closer I greeted him, but he did not reply. When I greeted him again, he looked at me and asked, ‘What do you want?’ ‘Two things’, I replied. ‘Firstly, the rain is pouring down, but you have not opened your umbrella.’ Sir James smiled at his own absent-mindedness and opened his umbrella. ‘Secondly’, I continued, ‘I would like to know that a man of universal fame such as yourself is doing – going to pray in Church?’ Sir James paused for a while, then, looking at me, he said, ‘Come and have tea with me this evening.’ So I went along to his house that afternoon. At exactly 4 o’clock, Lady James appeared. ‘Sir James is waiting for you’, she said. I went inside, where tea was ready on the table. Sir James was lost in thought. ‘What was your question again?’ he asked, and without waiting for an answer, he went off into an inspiring description of the creation of the celestial bodies and the astonishing order to which they adhere, the incredible distances over which they travel and the unfailing regularity which they maintain, their intricate journeys through space in their orbits, their mutual attraction, and that they never wavered from the path chosen for them, no matter how complicated it might be. His vivid account of the Power and Majesty of God made my heart begin to tremble. As for him, the hair on his head was standing up straight. His eyes were shining with awe and wonder. Trepidation at the thought of God’s all-knowing and all-powerful nature made his hands tremble and his voice falter. ‘You know, Inayat-ullah Khan’,

he said, ‘when I behold God’s marvellous feats of creation, my whole being trembles in awe at His majesty. When I go to Church I bow my head and say, “Lord, how great you are”, and not only my lips, but every particle of my body joins in uttering these words. I obtain incredible peace and joy from my prayer. Compared to others, I receive a thousand times more fulfilment from my prayer. So tell me, Inayatullah Khan, now do you understand why I go to Church?’” Sir James Jeans’s words left Inayat-ullah Mashriqi’s mind spinning. “Sir”, he said, “your inspiring words have made a deep impression on me. I am reminded of a verse of the Quran which, if I may be allowed, I should like to quote.” “Of course.” Sir James replied. Inayat-ullah Khan then recited this verse: “And in the mountains are streaks of varying shades of white, red, and raven black; just as people, living beings, and cattle are of various colours as well. Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable of His might are truly in awe of Him.”³⁶⁹ “What was that?” exclaimed Sir James. “It is those alone who have knowledge who fear God. Wonderful! How extraordinary! It has taken me fifty years of continual study and observation to realize this fact. Who taught it to Muhammad? Is this really in the Quran? If so, you can record my testimony that the Quran’s an inspired Book. Muhammad was illiterate. He could not have learnt this immensely important fact on his own. God must have taught it to him. Incredible! How extraordinary!”³⁷⁰

This interesting discussion between Jeans and Mashriqi contains many points that would surprise any reader. That Jeans – being the student of astronomy that he was – was deeply influenced by the Qur’anic verse and was able to tearfully offer his improvised perspective was a scene that would animate any human heart with faith. Because Mashriqi was younger than Jeans, and given that the latter was visibly influenced by the faith in Allah that Mashriqi had, this in turn had a deep influence in shoring up the youngster’s faith in Allah, as if Jeans was a godsend for him.

This wonderful universe with all its galaxies, stars, planets, moons, orbital movements, and planetary systems led Professor Jeans to seek out the religion closest to him, which happened to be Christianity. Imagine what would have been the case had he known the Preserved Book of Allah and saw the wondrous scientific, legislative, rhetorical, and spiritual inimitability therein. Also consider that Jeans was shocked to learn the statement of Allah ‘It is those alone who have knowledge who fear God’, testifying that the Qur’an is the truth. It is indeed wondrous how the Qur’an makes human hearts feel.

³⁶⁹ *Fāṭir*, 27-28.

³⁷⁰ *God Arises: Evidence of God in Nature and in Science*, pp. 381-383.

One key aspect of this discussion was how you can see Professor Jeans was in agreement with his innate human *fiṭrah*, as he glorified Allah and said, ‘Lord, how great You are.’ Imagine what would have been the case had he known the guidance of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and how he conversed with Allah with the best of remembrance phrases and at the best of occasions, so much so that his feet became swollen as he stood in prayer. In addition, look at how Professor Jeans was overcome by peace and contentment as he conversed with Allah as he glorified Him. Imagine what would have been the result had he tasted the peace offered by the Qur’an, the contentment offered by the vigil (*tahajjud*) prayer, and the sweet taste of humility and submission in front of Allah.

All these elements in the glorification of Allah manifested for Professor Jeans, as he contemplated the wonders of the heavens and the Earth, so much so that he ended up testifying that the Qur’an and the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ are true. Indeed, Allah spoke the truth: ‘We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this Quran is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a Witness over all things?’³⁷¹

These feelings that Professor Jeans felt, as he contemplated the great wonders of the heavens and the Earth and the beauty of astronomy, was presented to many people other than him as well. Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) was a leading figure in German philosophy. In his trilogy on moral philosophy, he started the conclusion to the second book with an interesting expression: ‘Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within.’³⁷²

When you ponder over what Kant said as he related these feelings in himself, and then you look at the central position that Kant holds within philosophy in general and German philosophy in particular, you will inevitably reach the spectacular conclusion that even a person who was deeply entrenched in these complex disciplines could not but be animated by the astronomical signs in the heaven.

Let us look beyond this class of scientists and philosophers. Let us look at a class that is more honourable, pure, and knowledgeable than them – the leaders of Islamic knowledge and faith. If we analyse this class of scholars, I for one cannot look past the story that Abū Ḥafṣ al-Bazzār (d. 749 AH) relates, which he records in his book *al-A‘lām al-‘Aliyyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah*. Bazzār’s book, in my view, is the best that has ever been written that records the virtues of Ibn Taymiyyah. Yes, the biographies written by Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī and Ibn Kathīr have more details in some areas; however, Bazzār relates the subtle mannerisms of how Ibn Taymiyyah dealt with issues throughout the day and night. We cannot

³⁷¹ *Fuṣṣilat*, 53.

³⁷² *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 138.

find this exposition elsewhere. Even the manner in which Ibn Taymiyyah recited *takbīr* and opened his prayer is recorded. Maybe the reason for this was that Bazzār was extremely interested in recording the personal life and times of Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah used to keep Bazzār close to him. Bazzār says, ‘When I was residing in Damascus, I was with him for almost all of the day and most of the night. He would make me sit next to him.’³⁷³ I am envious of anyone who has not yet read *al-A‘lām al-‘Aliyyah*, for it is indeed the most joyous read.

This story about Ibn Taymiyyah, which Bazzār relates, is connected to our topic on astronomy. Immediately after the Fajr prayer, Ibn Taymiyyah had a routine. Bazzār says, ‘Then he would start off by remembering Allah. Everyone knew that after the Fajr prayer, his habit was to not be spoken to without a dire need. He would continue to remember Allah in a voice he would be able to hear; sometimes it would be in a voice that someone sitting nearby would be able to hear. During this time, he would frequently raise his gaze to the sky. This was his routine until the Sun would rise and the unlawful time for prayer would pass.’³⁷⁴

Look at how much Abū al-‘Abbās Ibn Taymiyyah used to look at the kingdom of the heavens and the Earth after the Fajr prayer, as he remembered Allah. He turned his gaze to the heaven as that helped him focus on the magnificence of the Divine. The only reason why raising the gaze to the heaven is not allowed in prayer is because it is a place to be humble and respectful; apart from that, there is no prohibition on raising the gaze to the heaven. The Prophet ﷺ used to turn his face to the sky as he yearned for the switching of the *qiblah*: ‘Indeed, We see you O Prophet turning your face towards heaven. Now We will make you turn towards a direction of prayer that will please you.’³⁷⁵

One of the best ways to leverage astronomy as a gateway to faith, which far exceeds that which is mentioned by ordinary people, is what happened to Ibrāhīm ؑ vis-à-vis the celestial bodies. Allah mentions in his Book that He showed Ibrāhīm ؑ ‘the wonders of the heavens and the Earth’ to achieve a clear result: ‘so he would be sure in faith’. Which proof can possibly be greater than this? It shows that astronomy is a way of ascent to faith. What can be greater than the celestial bodies and their behaviours in being a staircase for the heart to rise above doubts to reach certainty? ‘We also showed Abraham the wonders of the heavens and the Earth, so he would be sure in faith.’³⁷⁶

Look at the wonders of the heavens and the Earth. Anyone who does this would end up in the paradise of certainty. Allah invites us to look at the wonders of the heavens and the Earth: ‘Have they ever reflected on the wonders of the

³⁷³ *Al-A‘lām al-‘Aliyyah*, p. 38.

³⁷⁴ *Al-A‘lām al-‘Aliyyah*, p. 38.

³⁷⁵ *Al-Baqarah*, 144.

³⁷⁶ *Al-An‘ām*, 75.

heavens and the Earth...?’³⁷⁷ In any case, whoever reads the story of astrophysicist James Jeans, and his animation over the magnificence of Allah’s making and the innovation in His system that led him to tears...Whoever looks at Kant’s statement when he discussed how he was impacted and awed whenever he looked at the starry heaven above us...Whoever ponders how Ibn Taymiyyah would turn his gaze to the sky after the Fajr prayer until the Sun would rise... And after all of this, he reads the statement of Allah: ‘We also showed Abraham the wonders of the heavens and the Earth, so he would be sure in faith...’³⁷⁸ He would have learned one of the great secrets of the Qur’an that implants certainty in the hearts and minds of humans.

Whenever a person thinks carefully of the last passage – ‘so he would be sure in faith’ – the great doors to *iḥsān* would open up for him. It is the highest station of the religion, sitting above *īmān* and *islām*. It means to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, denoting a very strong sense of belief. When you see the stars shining in front of your eyes, use that opportunity to ascend to the summit of conviction.

Allah knows best. May Allah send blessings and salutations on our Prophet Muhammad, his Family, and his Companions.

15 Shawwāl, 1433 AH.

³⁷⁷ *Al-A‘rāf*, 185.

³⁷⁸ *Al-An‘ām*, 75.