

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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Abstract

It is observed that most of things in the Cosmos are inter-dependent on each other. For instance, human beings are dependent on food, water, favourable environment etc, and human food, vegetation, drinking water are dependent upon other things for their existence. A deeper look into this scenario reveals that there must be a comprehensive existence on which all things are dependent in one way or other. Meaning existence of a perfect independent existence is more logical than the existence of a less perfect existence. Philosophers are fascinated and mystified with this logical explanation of a most perfect existence (God) in the Cosmos which is the cause of all existences in the world. However, there are some philosophers who deny the existence of a perfect entity in this Cosmos and say that natural selection is a self-evolutionary process, and all existences evolve because of this process. We have discussed different perceptions and arguments of the people in this context to find out the most logical perception about the existence of God.

Keywords – Existence, God, Cosmological Argument, Polytheism, Atheism

Beliefs about God

(i) Theism

Theism is a broad-based belief in the existence of God. There are 6 types of theism, as follows.

(a) *Monotheism* is the belief in one Supreme God.

(b) *Polytheism* is the belief in different Gods / Deities.

(c) *Pantheism* is the belief that, the physical universe is God or equivalent to God.

(d) *Panentheism* is a belief that, God is joined with everything in the Cosmos or penetrates every part of the Cosmos and is beyond time and space.

(e) *Atheism* is the belief in the non-existence of God.

(f) *Negative Atheism* is a belief that there cannot be a definite opinion about the existence or non-existence of God. Negative Atheists claim there is insufficient evidence to conclude in either way and that in principle, this question cannot be resolved in a logical way.

(g) *Apathiesm* is a tendency among certain people towards the existence or non-existence of God. They do not consider it is important to know about it. It is more of an attitude rather than a belief, claim, or belief system. The term was coined by Robert Nash in 2001.

(ii) Deism

Deism is a belief in one or different gods. Deists consider that observation of nature is sufficient to know the existence of God. They do not believe in revelations as a source of divine knowledge and claim that God's existence is revealed only through nature, not through revelations. This is against the beliefs of theists who do not reject the revelations as a source of divine knowledge.

(iii) Agnosticism

Agnosticism is the belief that the existence of God is unknown or unknowable. Human reasoning is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify the existence or non-existence of God. The difference between Agnosticism and Apatheism is that agnosticism concerns with the uncertainty about the existence of God while Apatheism is a belief that the question of the existence of a god is unimportant.

(iv) Irreligionism

Irreligionism or non-religionism is indifference to, or rejection of religion.

As has been described above, the differences of opinions about the existence of God are divided among people on different lines, like (a) theism and Atheism are based on belief in God or lack of it, (b) Gnosticism and Agnosticism are based on knowledge about God, or lack of it, and Deism is based on reason and rejection of revelation, and theism is based on both reason and revelation.

The major reason behind the rejection of God

The word 'god' is used by different people in different connotations. Some people believe in hundreds of millions of gods, while others believe in a few hundred or a few dozen or three gods.

Polytheistic religions have undergone changes over centuries as most of the gods worshiped by earlier people have been abandoned. New gods have been added by successive generations. Meaning, people no longer believe in the gods worshiped by their ancestors / elders. In view of this and many other related issues, belief in God has become contentious. This is the primary reason for rejection of God by Atheists.

Differences of opinion among philosophers

Can God's existence be proved logically? There are differences of opinions among philosophers and scholars in this context. We have provided below important arguments in this context.

(i) It is unnecessary to prove the existence of God from the religious point of view. In religion there are other ways to prove it, like the existence of God is proved through religious traditions of mysticism. However, as mystic explanations can neither be verified nor quantified in a scientific way, many philosophers reject them.

(ii) Belief in one God is a primary tenet of Abrahamic religions. God is considered a powerful, real and an existing entity. He is omnipotent and omniscient and the source of

all morality. God has spoken through appointed Apostles to disclose the facts about him and the Cosmos which were otherwise not knowable by human beings. However, different interpretations of monotheism given by these religions, like trinity of Christians, Monotheism of Islam, and Jewish belief of their God to have sons and daughters, make the issue complicated. In addition, there are various sects within these religions who hold divergent views about the interpretation of monotheism. As a result, this is not acceptable to some philosophers.

(iii) Polytheistic religions believe in different gods with different powers. Some believe in one most powerful god under whom there are sub gods with different powers who are independent of each other. But this believe does not appeal to human logic.

(iv) The followers of Pantheism believe that all things in the Cosmos compose of God. Pantheists do not believe in a distinct personal God, rather claim that everything is God, or everything is composed of God. This believe also does not appeal to human logic.

Arguments related to the concept of God

Arguments related to God are of two types, (a) religious tenet or theory that there is a creator of this Cosmos, and (b) Human experience based on their observation of this Cosmos, known as cosmological argument.

The cosmological argument about the existence of God is based on causation, meaning, there is a first cause or a necessary being from whom all contingent beings derive their existence. Whatever exists in the Cosmos might not have existed before since for everything to exist, there must be a reason, depending upon the degree of its perfection. Something must be a prime mover, or the most efficient cause for the existence of contingent existences. However, there are differences of opinion among scholars in this context.

(i) The people who claim this Cosmos is self-existent on its own, say that the natural

selection of things is a prime mover. For them, natural selection is a self-evolutionary process in which the forms of organisms which are best adopted to the environment grow in frequency. This is known as Darwin theory.

(ii) The people who oppose Darwin theory say that there is an intelligent design in the Cosmos which is evident from the fact that the certain biological organisms could not have adopted to the environment through natural selection unless they were created to do so by an intelligent designer / creator.

(iii) Things appear in the cosmos, reach to their peak in life and fade away. Meaning everything has a lifespan. This means that there must be a time when nothing existed, except the creator of this Cosmos.

(iv) When we see a table, it is justified that the mind will presume that there is a carpenter who created it. Similarly, the Cosmos justifies the presumption that there must be a creator of this Cosmos.

(v) Sufi scholars among Muslims assert that every individual who is a sincere seeker of the Creator of this Cosmos, usually arrives at the same destination of belief in God. The reason is that the result must be consistent if the same divine entity is being addressed, who is expected to guide them to the same understanding. Al-Ghazali was one among the prominent Sufi scholars of Islam who was the proponent of this theory.

Conclusion

Proofs for the existence of God overwhelm the arguments of the people who deny the existence of God. Human experience based on observation of this Cosmos, known as cosmological argument for the existence of God, looks more convincing and appeals to logic.

The problem arises when people look at the belief system of polytheistic religions among whom gods are changed by the passage of time. Followers of polytheistic religions say that there are different gods who are creating different

things. Then, their later generations change these gods and disbelieve in the earlier gods worshiped by their elders. This confuses the human mind and people start to reject the existence of God altogether. Similarly, some people say everything is God or God is in everything, this also does not appeal to logic.

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About the author



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian, and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000 books on various Islamic subjects. He has written many research articles on religion, history, and other subjects. He is also the Editor in Chief of CIFIA Global Journal.