

## The Existence of God

“A desert nomad was asked about the existence of God. He said: Camel droppings point to the existence of a camel. Footprints in the sand tell of a traveller. The heavens with its stars, the earth with its mountains and valleys, and the sea with its waves - do they not point to the Maker, All Powerful, Knowing, Wise and Caring?”

This argument applies to the notion of causality; an essential principle of rational thought. From the existence of camel's droppings one can immediately conclude that a camel exists. In like manner the nomad applies the principle of causality to the whole world.

A similar analogy might be: if we were to come upon a beach where pebbles and stones had been arranged in an intricate pattern, we would feel no hesitation in jumping to the conclusion that they had been arranged in such a manner. Although it is theoretically possible that the sea could have deposited the stones and pebbles in such a manner by chance, it would be considered most unlikely.

Suppose then while walking in the woods we came upon a machine. Our attitude towards the machine would be very different from our attitude towards a nearby stone. We would immediately conclude that the machine was not deposited at this place by the elements, but was the product of an engineer who had built it. Even if the machine was unlike anything we had seen before, the intricacies of the machine alone would be sufficient for us to conclude that it had been made by an engineer. We would not conclude that the machine had come into existence accidentally.

The machine to the engineer is like the world to God, but human beings and animals are not like machines. Yes, machines have designers and thus one can say living bodies have designers. But the simplest creature is far more complex than any machine ever designed by an engineer. If the engineer designed the machine, who other than God designed the universe?

The standard argument forward to counter this “design” argument, is that the universe came into being purely by chance through the random forces of nature of millions of years. Thus the diversity and intricacy found in humans and animals is put down to chance. This argument holds that there is no purpose behind the universe and the complexity and the intricacy of the world.

But we have to acknowledge that the simplest living creature is more complex than a car; and it would be absurd to believe that an inorganic matter could come together by chance in such a manner as to make a car. It must therefore be even more absurd to consider that the inorganic matter could come together to form an organism. Living experience show us that without God's “design” the random evolutionary process could never have got started. Moreover, once begun, the time allowed by scientists for the development of the universe and our world falls far short of what would be required to have produced the world as we know it from random combinations of atoms.

Finally, how does one explain the beauty and diversity in the world without reference to a purposeful God. The world exhibits order and regularity that testifies to the wisdom of God. This is in stark contradiction to the scientific view that things naturally tend towards disorder which only proves that something is indeed ordering life to a particular plan.

This factor is evident in Imam Shafi's answer to the question of what is the proof for the existence of God? He replied: “The leaf of the mulberry tree. It's colour, smell, taste and everything about it seem one and the same to you. But a caterpillar eats it and it comes out as fine silken thread. A bee feeds on it and it comes out as honey. A sheep eats it and it comes out as dung. Gazelles chew on it and it congeals producing the fragrance of musk. “Who has made all these different things come from the same type of leaf?”

Such intricate relationships require an intelligent, purposeful ‘mind’ behind the world, and not the random unconscious and unintelligent process of chance. The occurrence of events requiring to explain them, as done here by Imam Shafi, is positive proof for the designer of the world, Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala.