Is there a God ?

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Sometime it helps to decompose a big question into number of small questions which are easy to answer. In the case of the present questions, no matter how many questions we decompose it into, it remains as hard and complex as the original question. Before decomposing the present question into large number of smaller questions let me decompose it into two questions:
(1) what does it mean by the god ? (2) what does it mean by "to exist".

Since the second question is easy to answer let me attack that first. We do not need any evidence to prove that we exist, it is self evident. We say something (call it 'A') exists when the world is different in the presence and absence of that thing. For example, we say 'light exists in the room' because we have seen the room in the absence and presence of light and we can make out the difference. Existence of the god cannot be proved in this way since people who believe in the god cannot tell how the world will look like in the absence of the god. In fact they can stretch the argument further and can say that the existence of the god for human beings is as important as the existence of water for fish - in both the cases the second cannot exist in the absence of the first. Existence of everything physical can be easily shown. In fact not only existence of material stuff, existence of the laws which govern the properties and phenomenons of the stuff in world also can be easily shown.

When people talk about the god they are never talking about one single thing. They are talking about a wide range of phenomenons from miracles to 'gaps of science' and from 'original cause' to the helplessness of human beings. In fact they are never sure what they are talking about and they randomly jump from one issue to another. The reason behind that is there is no single definition of the god and without that it is hard to show the existence of the god. Most often when I say I do not believe in the god people ask me has science solved all the problems ? or how you explain this or that miracle ? In most cases when religious people are thinking about the god they are never thinking about something universal, they are always thinking about some super-human beings more of less described in their text. However, when they are arguing about the god they are arguing about some super-natural, higher-authority or ultimate explanation. For a sensible person (that is again debatable) it will not take much time to prove that the god as described in various religious text does not exist. Since the concept of the god arise always in cultural context therefore it is very hard to come up with a universal definition of the god which may work across the cultures.

Scientists do not like to associate any purpose and meaning to the world. In fact they consider the question of purpose and meaning useless. What is the purpose of an electron when it orbits around a nucleus ? What is the purpose of things moving around in the universe ? People who believe in the god always find some purpose for everything around them by invoking the god. I strongly believe that the idea of the god was originated not only for answering big questions like the purpose and meaning, it was originated in the context of explaining mundane things: how natural phenomenas take place ? why people fall ill ? and so on. In fact still in primitive societies things which are not under control of people or not understandable by people (including child birth), are associated with the god.

Sometime the existence of god is associated with complex phenomenas like consciousness. Every one of us is made from non-living stuff still we posses this amazing thing called consciousness which seems to lie beyond the limit of science. How it arise ? Can we make a machine/computer which have consciousness. If consciousness cannot arise naturally (we cannot create it by following a bottom-up approach) then how it was originated in the first place. The same logic holds for life also. Life seems to be so complex that it is hard to believe that it can come into existence without any intervention of some intelligent being. Darwain's theory of evolution by natural selection can explain evolution of complex life from some simple life but it cannot explain the origin of simple life from non-life. I think the question of "origin" may remain forever unsolved. At least that seems to be the case at present as far as the origin of the life and universe is concerned.

Who should prove the existence of god ? scientists ? religious people ? opinion poll ? god himself ? I cannot think about any other option. Scientists have a particular way of proving things. They firstly make a hypothesis and then collect data to support or reject the hypothesis. Almost all scientists have a prejudice that everything in the universe can be explained and this prejudice have been driving the growth of science for centuries. This is the main reason that they were never comfortable with the idea of god. I am not sure if it is fare to say that a problem does not have a solution when we do not have one. Religious people do not share common language and methodology with scientists and any answer scientists come up will remain unacceptable to them since they are driven by faith not by reason. I wonder why god should not prove himself that he exists ! and settle the issue for once and for all. Religious people will say god is doing that all the time but only people who believe in that can appreciate that. In fact some people say that god exists only for those people who believe in god. I find this answer highly unsatisfactory. You cannot say the Sun or Moon exists only for those people who believe in the their existence. If you trust opinion poll then god exists ! since most people in the world believe in that. But should we leave such an important question to opinion poll. Do we make decisions about technical issues on the basis of opinion poll ?

I think the question of whether there is a god or not may always remain a puzzle but why people believe in god can be easily answered on the basis of psychology, and I think some people are already doing that. As far as I understand people are insecure due to various reasons and they are always looking for some support. The idea of god serves that purpose. In any case most people believe in the god not due to some philosophical interests, they believe in the god in the form of a "universal problem solver" for their day to day affairs.

The god in the context of religion is completely different from the god in the context of some purpose and meaning of the universe, ultimate truth or reality. Most of this questions can arise in the mind of individuals having thinking capacity. However, the idea of religion makes sense only in the context of a group of people or a society. I strongly believe that religion is an emerging phenomenon of "group living". Religious practices make sense only when somebody is noticing them. It is not a surprise that many of the founders of various religions were after the truth and meaning of life. However, their followers completely forgot that and started blindly following their prophets. I strongly believe that people who are more materialistic require more than people who are less.

In a very broad sense spirituality (not religion !) serves two purposes. It provides people a way to look at things which can make them comfortable or it helps people to make their life happy just like many other things (including money and relationships) do. Another important purpose of spirituality is lead people towards the ultimate truth.

Whatever beliefs people have they are never are in isolation. Socio-cultural background plays an important role in shaping the views of people about various things including the god. In fact most people do not have any choice then believe in what they believe. People believe in the existence of the god mostly due to cultural reasons. In fact in most societies not believing in the god is considered unacceptable. People relate belief in the god with moral behavior and think that in the absence of belief in the god people will do all sorts of bad things. From my personal experiences, I can say that people who believe in the god and involve themselves in religious practices are more insensitive towards other people. In fact it has been found that they are more immoral.

In general people think that the fear of god can motivate people towards good behavior. The idea that the god rewards good people and punish bad people has been an important part of many religious teachings and there are all sorts of stories to support that. I found this logic unacceptable. If the god controls everything what people do in the world then how they can be considered responsible for things which are not under their control. People who believe in the god cannot answer the question that what is the purpose of the god. Does god want people to do good behavior ? If that is so then why he created (if he is the creator) the bad people. In place of being a collection of coherent ideas, I found that the god theory which is still occupying the minds of a large fraction of population in the world is a bundle of incoherent and contradictory ideas fed by faith.

Present article is from my blog post which I wrote sometime in 2010