

The Scientific Collapse of Materialism

H A R U N Y A H Y A

Materialism can no longer claim to be a scientific philosophy.
Arthur Koestler, the renowned Social Philosopher
(Arthur Koestler, *Janus: A Summing Up*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978, p. 250.)

How did the endless universe we live in come into being?

How did the equilibrium, harmony, and order of this universe develop?

How is it that this Earth is such a fit and sheltering place for us to live in?

Questions such as these have attracted attention since the dawn of the human race. The conclusion reached by scientists and philosophers searching for answers with their intellects and common sense is that the design and order of this universe are evidence of the existence of a supreme Creator ruling over the whole universe.

This is an indisputable truth that we may reach by using our intelligence. God declares this reality in His holy book, the Qur'an, which He inspired as a guide for humanity fourteen centuries ago. He states that He has created the universe when it was not, for a particular purpose, and with all its systems and balances specifically designed for human life.

God invites people to consider this truth in the following verse:

Are you stronger in structure or is heaven? He built it. He raised its vault high and made it level. He darkened its night and brought forth its morning light. After that He smoothed out the earth... (Surat an-Nazi'at: 27-30)

Elsewhere it is declared in the Qur'an that a person should see and consider all the systems and balances in the universe that have been created for him by God and derive a lesson from his observations:

He has made night and day subservient to you, and the sun and moon and stars, all subject to His command. There is certainly Signs in that for people who pay heed. (Surat an-Nahl: 12)

In yet another verse of the Qur'an, it is pointed out:

He makes night merge into day and day merge into night, and He has made the sun and moon subservient, each one running until a specified time. That is God, your Lord. The Kingdom is His. Those you call on besides Him have no power over even the smallest speck. (Surah Fatir: 13)

This plain truth declared by the Qur'an is also confirmed by a number of the important founders of the modern science of astronomy. Galileo, Kepler, and Newton all recognized that the structure of universe, the design of the solar system, the laws of physics and their states of equilibrium were all created by God and they arrived at that conclusion as a result of their own research and observations.

Materialism: A 19th-Century Fallacy

The reality of the creation of which we speak has been ignored or denied since the earliest times by a particular philosophical point of view. It is called "materialism". This philosophy, which was originally formulated among the ancient Greeks, has also made an appearance from time to time in other cultures and has been advanced by individuals as well. It holds that matter alone exists and that it has done so for an infinity of time. From these tenets, it claims that the universe has also "always" existed and was not created.

In addition to their claim that the universe exists in an infinity of time, materialists also assert that there is no purpose or aim in the universe. They claim that all the equilibrium, harmony and order that we see around us are merely the product of coincidence. This "coincidence assertion" is also put forward when the question of how human beings came into being comes up. The theory of evolution, widely referred to as Darwinism, is another application of materialism to the natural world.

We just mentioned that some of the founders of modern science were faithful people who were in agreement that the universe was created and organized by God. In the 19th century, an important change took place in the attitudes of the scientific world with respect to this matter. Materialism was deliberately introduced to the agenda of modern science by various groups. Because the 19th century's political and social conditions formed a good basis for materialism, the philosophy gained wide acceptance and spread throughout the scientific world.

The findings of modern science however undeniably demonstrate how false the claims of materialism really are.

The Findings of 20th-Century Science

Let us recall the two assertions of materialism about the universe:

The universe exists in infinite time and, because it has no beginning or end, it was not created.

Everything in this universe is merely the result of chance and not the product of any intentional design, plan, or vision.

Those two notions were boldly advanced and ardently defended by 19th-century materialists, who of course had no recourse other than to depend upon the limited and unsophisticated scientific knowledge of their day. Both have been utterly refuted by the discoveries of 20th-century science.

The first to be laid in the grave was the notion of the universe existing in infinite time. Since the 1920s, there has been mounting evidence this cannot be true. Scientists are now certain that the universe came into being from nothingness as the result of an unimaginably huge explosion, known as the "**Big Bang**". In other words, the universe came into being-or rather, it was created by God.

The 20th century has also witnessed the demolition of the second claim of materialism: that everything in the universe is the result of chance and not design. Research conducted since the 1960s consistently demonstrates that all the physical equilibriums of the universe in general and of our world in particular are intricately designed to make life possible. As this research deepened, it was discovered each and every one of the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology, of the fundamental forces such as gravity and electromagnetism, and of the details of the structure of atoms and the elements of the universe has been precisely tailored so that human beings may live. Scientists today call this extraordinary design the "anthropic principle". This is the principle that every detail in the universe has been carefully arranged to make human life possible.

To sum up, the philosophy called materialism has been utterly refuted by modern science. From its position as the dominant scientific view of the 19th century, materialism collapsed into fiction in the 20th.

How could it have been otherwise? As God indicates **"We did not create heaven and earth and everything between them to no purpose. That is the opinion of those who are disbelievers."** (Surah Sad: 27) it is wrong to suppose that the universe was created in vain. A philosophy so utterly flawed as materialism and systems based on it were doomed to failure from the very beginning.