

an empirical scientific theory backed by irrefutable empirical evidence that is as factually self-evident to its earnest purveyors as the the fact that earth is round and aggressively and systematically promoted by them as such to gullible Muslims and non-Muslims.

Such an empirical argumentative discursive strategy demands contemporary *mutakallims* to be thoroughly familiar with the relevant empirical and mathematical sciences impacting on evolutionary theory as well as with the complex, intricate process of scientific discovery, reasoning and justification by which theoretical propositions are transformed into “factual” statements in the influential science journals, popular science books and best-selling academic textbooks. “*And debate with them with the best debate.*” (Q 16:125).

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Tahseen N. Khan. *The Provenance of Man: A Sunni Apologetic of the Original Creation of Ādam* [‘alayh al-salām]. Chicago: Philasufical Publications, 2023, 154 pp. ISBN 9798218132996

This book by an obviously erudite scholar of Islamic analytical theology (*kalām*), exegesis (*tafsīr*) and rhetorics (*‘ilm al-bayān*) is divided into seven unnumbered chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. Though directed against Muslim evolutionists in general, it especially engages the evolutionist views of the UAE-based Algerian astrophysicist Nidhal Guessoum.

The basic contention of the book is that the affirmation of biological parentage for Ādam by Muslim evolutionists such as Guessoum is irreconcilable with its negation. (p. 5). Whether they realize it or not they are in fact subscribing to the ideology of philosophical naturalism, scientism and positivism when they attempt to construct “a story of human evolution from the Qur’ānic verses that read in total accord with the modern theory.” (pp. 8-10). Such a stance obviously renders the ever-shifting, provisional inductive conclusions of modern science as the final arbiter over what can or cannot be interpreted from the verses of the Qur’ān, bypassing altogether and even doing violence to the established objective canons and principles of Qur’ānic commentary and interpretation (*usūl al-tafsīr*). (pp. 89 ff).

Moreover, Muslim evolutionists like Guessoum have failed “to explain why the methods of science, despite its obvious limitations, should be given this lofty status as the absolute criterion against which the apparent mean-

ings of scripture should be judged.” (p. 9). They have also not explained nor detailed in any rigorous manner a compelling, alternative interpretative methodology to justify and show why the inductive and thus fallible modern scientific consensus on evolution should be prioritized over the well established Islamic scholarly consensus (pp. 69-72) on the special, original creation of Ādam. (p. 7). As Thomas Kuhn and others have shown, the history of science, ancient and modern, are strewn with cognitive revolutions in which consensus sooner or later get overthrown by new ones.

In refutation of Muslim evolutionists who hold that the scriptural evidence for the negation of parentage for Ādam in the Qurʾān is only of probabilistic warrant (*zannī al-dilāla*), Khan shows clearly that such evidence is epistemically certain and definitive (*qaṭʿī al-dilāla*). “The crux of this monograph will be dedicated towards proving that the Qurʾān decisively indicates this.” (p. 11). This he does in detail in the fourth, fifth and six chapters of the book by discussing the full import of verse 3:59, “*Indeed, the similitude of ʿĪsā in the sight of Allāh is like the similitude of Ādam. He created him from dust then He said unto him, ‘Be!’ and he became,*” which he says is the “single-most important verse in decisively proving the original creation of Ādam.” (p. 73).

Khan makes a crucial point in his critique of the scientism of the Muslim evolutionists that “Empiricism relies on inductive reasoning whereby incomplete, particular results are interpreted and then universalized to reach broader conclusions.” This universalization or generalization, which includes extension and extrapolation to new cases and projection to past or future scenarios, is not strictly empirical in itself but is rather “a judgement of the rational mind,” and such a judgement is by its very nature hypothetical (*iftirādī*) and thus totally conjectural and speculative (*waḥmī*), subject, in turn, to empirical confirmation or falsification (*tajribah ḥissiyyah*), and is thus not itself a statement of irrefutable empirical fact that is actually observed and experienced, (p. 14), for “*I have not made them to be witnesses of the creation of the heavens and earth, nor of the creation of their own selves; and I would not ever take those who lead others astray to be My supporters.*” (Q 18:51). (p. 152).

Khan further points out that the Arabic terms, *insān* and *bashar*, for the human being in the Qurʾān, do not analytically entail biological parentage. Moreover we are informed in the Qurʾān that Allāh has created human beings (and indeed other beings for the matter) either through sexual reproduction, asexual reproduction or even without reproduction. (pp. 29-31). In other words, biological parentage is not an essential or intrinsic attribute or quality of man by which he is defined and recognized as ‘man’, as elaborated at some length by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in his monograph refuting evolution, *Justice and the Nature of Man* (also reviewed in this issue of *Islamic Sciences*), and most recently in his newly launched book, *Islām: The Covenants Fulfilled* (Kuala Lumpur: Ta’dib International, 2023).

The longest chapter of the book (pp. 13-64) discusses at length the cognitive importance of making a clear distinction between rational judgement (*ḥukm ʿaqlī*) and nomic judgement (*ḥukm ʿādī*), (pp. 37 ff), and how the former can override or qualify the latter as being only provisionally certain or true, but not vice versa. (pp. 39 ff). “In sum, every necessary or impossible nomic judgement (*wājib ʿādī aw mustahīl ʿādī*) that is rationally possible (*ajāz ʿaqlī*) is subject to the will and omnipotence of Allāh by virtue of Him being the freely-willing agent and omnipotent God that He must necessarily be.” (p. 45).

This means that nomic judgements are in themselves not final and absolute but subject to qualification by reference to the definitive scriptural proofs of Divine Revelation, and this is especially so in cases pertaining to what is in principle or in practice beyond the ken of direct or indirect human sensible experience and perception, namely the realm of the unseen (*ʿālam al-ghayb*). In other words, scientists, especially if they are believing Muslims need to be well aware of the epistemic limits of empirical science, and that beyond such limits, such a science has no choice but to submit to the authority of Revelation.

Though Khan did not quite express it in this way (pp. 45-53), we can then see miracles (*muʿjizah*, lit., “that which incapacitates”) as the result of what might be called a “super-imposition” of a higher supra-natural order of reality (*martabat al-wujūd*) onto the normal regular natural order of daily experience, for everything is already foreordained and measured out in due measure (*qadr, taqdir*) and nothing is arbitrary or whimsical (*ʿabath*) or in vain (*bāṭil*) in the overall total divine system or *sunnah* of creation, for “*you will find no change in Allāh’s way (sunnat Allāh).*” (Q 33:62).

We must therefore understand that natural laws are grounded in immutable moral laws, express them and find their purpose and meaning in such grounding and expression, and as such these laws or patterns are but semiotic indicators of divine wisdom and power (*āyāt Allāh*). In the Islamic semiotics of nature and natural processes, nature points not to itself but to what transcends itself, as so eloquently elaborated by Badīʿuzzamān Saʿīd al-Nūrī in *The Supreme Sign (al-āyat al-kubrā)*.

Though nature (i.e., *ṭabīʿah*, *ʿālam al-shahādah*, or “the world of sense and sensible experience,” in Attasian parlance) works according to natural laws or rather works for the most part in a manner describable or predictable by those laws, neither itself nor its constituents and processes are generated or produced by those laws, which are but patterns, regularities and rhythms that we have abstracted from nature through a cognitive process of systematic observation and experimentation and then quantitatively described through mathematics in the case of the so-called “hard” sciences like physics, or qualitatively, even rhetorically described in the “softer” sciences like biology and medicine.

Therefore, miracles are fore-ordained by Allāh to occur when they occur in order to “rupture” our sense of smug reliance on these natural laws as if they

possess causative agency of their own, to awaken us from our dogmatic stupor of heedlessness (*ghafla*) and thereby to draw our attention and consciousness to a higher, moral-spiritual order of reality. Yet, in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*), everything in creation is a miracle of direct divine creation (*kun fa yakūn*) imbued with wisdom (*ḥikmah*), truth (*ḥaqq*) and perfection (*itqān*) that “incapacitates” our human comprehension and control, and thus compelling us to show appreciation (*shakara*) and to submit (*aslama*) to the Lawgiver of those laws of nature.

So, what seems to us, in the case of miracles, to be a “violation” of the natural order of things is but an instantiation of a higher, supra-natural order of things, of a higher *ṭabi‘ah*, “super-imposed” onto the lower world (*dunyā*) of sense and sensible experience (*‘ālam al-shahāda*). Everything fits within the overall objective meta-natural system of creation even if occasionally it does not seem to fit into our limited subjective perception of what we take to be real, true or normal, and what “must be the case,” and hence, “*You do not see in the creation of Allah any incongruity.*” (Q 67:3). Everything is in consummate, perfect design and order (*ihkām*); everything, even miracles, is already measured out in due measure (*qadr, taqdīr*) and finds their proper place, function and reason for being in the overall dynamic structure of Creation.

The kind of gradual, linear, directional and incremental transformation, however improbable, from lower simple life forms to higher more complex ones envisioned in evolutionary theory through what it calls ‘natural selection’, ‘mutation’, ‘stochastic evolutionary dynamics’, etc., obviously requires a vast stretch of geologic history, or ‘deep time’, for it to occur. The basic idea here, however farfetched, is that given sufficient time for these stochastic dynamics to play out their role, life can naturally evolve, i.e. develops directionally, from simple to complex forms or even from inanimate, lifeless matter. Once we cut to the chase and do away all the hand-waving evolutionary jargon, all this boils down to basically asserting that, “Given enough time, things simply pop into place!” Such a view is tantamount to ascribing agency to time itself as some form of absolute, creative primal cause driving the whole random evolutionary process forward on the long, tortuous path of progress from the big bang to the big crunch.

Such a view—now accorded an aura of scientific respectability in the popular imagination through evolutionary theory taught in schools and colleges—harks back to the *Dahriyya* (lit., believers in time) of yore already described and rebutted in the Qur’ān, “*And they say, ‘There is not but our worldly life; we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time.’ And they have of that no knowledge; they are only assuming.*” (Q 45:24). Khan astutely draws our attention to these “early evolutionists” who “bore an eerie resemblance to the Neoatheists of today in using evolution as a tool to deny the original creation of Ādam.” (p. 66). The Dahriyyah “believed that time was pre-eternal with no beginning,” and by virtue of this belief denied the original creation of Ādam and insisted on bio-

logical parentage for him. (p. 68).

A remarkable feature of Khan's monograph that I have personally found very useful and enlightening is the copious references in the footnotes to many classical texts in early and late kalam, and to related works in exegesis (*tafsīr*) and rhetorics (*ilm al-bayān*) bearing on the debate, with long passages excerpted verbatim therefrom in their original Arabic. These short and long passages--understandably left untranslated since that would be too tedious--are obviously intended as a service to serious students of *bayān*, *kalām* and *tafsīr*. All in all, I see his work as complementing, explicating and reinforcing with detailed, systematic theological reasoning al-Attas's terse philosophical argument from human nature for the original and special creation of Ādam in his *Justice and the Nature of Man* (also reviewed here).

To conclude this review I would say that all laws of nature have been shown to be specified and fine-tuned to a very high degree of *takhṣīs* (specificity), *taqdīr* (measured-ness), *itqān* (perfection), *iḥsān* (refinement), *taskhīr* (fine-tunedness) and *taṣwīr* (well-formedness), all of which clearly indicate that these are but laws, patterns and regularities (*ādāt*) imposed on nature by an Imposer (*musakkhkhīr*) of infinite wisdom, will and power. That is the ultimate empirical conclusion from an empirical science that has long ago arrived at its cognitive limits, and by which arrival "empiricism transcends itself," as Karl Popper so aptly puts it in his wide-ranging dialogue with John Eccles in *The Self and Its Brain*.

The only consideration that has so far saved the current breed of well-funded aggressive, militant Muslim evolutionists (such as Shoaib Malik) from being formally, legally excommunicated (*takfīr*) is that they have so far refrained from saying explicitly that nature is god, or a partner to God, but God Himself most surely knows what lurks in the deepest recesses of their hearts and minds, but really, their love affair and obsession with evolution is, as such, their personal, private business with Allāh. However, it is altogether quite another matter when they go about the globe publicly and systematically promoting their *kufīrī* science of evolution--largely borrowed, by the way, from Christian theistic evolutionists such as S. Joshua Swamidass--to unfortunately gullible Muslims, both unlearned and learned in the Islamic religious sciences. They do that, then it is all out public war of *ḥaqq* against *bāṭil*. "Nay, but We hurl the truth against falsehood and it dashes its brains out; and behold, it vanishes. Then woe to you for what you ascribe." (Q 21:18).

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