

Does "HE" Exist?

Written By Brother Eugene Trzecieski



Table of Contents

Does God Exist?	3
Opinion	3
Distortion.....	3
Consider	4
I Don't Want To Know	5
Existence.....	5
Does God Exist and How Do I Know?	7
Reason: My Intelligence	7
Hungers/Curses	10
About Brother Eugene Trzeciecki	12

Does God Exist?

The most crucial pair of alternatives any human being can face: God exists or he doesn't.

If God doesn't exist, at death the Pope and the rape-killer receive exactly the same reward: annihilation. Each of us just accidentally un-happen. Ultimately, the God question is a question of our own value as human beings: are we immortal from the moment of our birth or are we just so much potential garbage?

Faith in God – or in anybody or anything – is a risk. But let it be a calculated risk. A calculated risk based upon some evidence or reasoning, not a fantasy or prejudice.

Opinion

"My opinion is as good as anyone else's!" Sez who?

Opinions are only as good as the evidence that backs them up. And evidence comes to us from the object in question; we don't manufacture the evidence out of our imaginations, in defiance of the object. The alcoholic who is utterly convinced that pink elephants are romping around his bed is wrong. They're not there. Nor is the truth of an opinion established by majority vote; the majority can be wrong. If you had taken a vote four hundred years ago about the shape of the earth, the flat-earth people would have won hands down. But the earth didn't flatten itself out to conform to their overwhelmingly unanimous opinion. Columbus discovered America not because he wanted to but because it was there. It got in his way. No matter how strong your belief or opinion, it can't make something real cease to exist.

At times, that's a bit hard to swallow. "I've got a right to my own opinion!" True, but you don't have an automatic right that your opinion be respected unless you've got evidence – weightier than just some vague "feeling" – to back it up.

Distortion

When we're talking about first-hand knowledge – the beginning of an opinion – we have to begin with the senses. The thing – a tree, for instance, comes to us; we don't put it out there. Then the mind, in an almost instantaneous assembly line, processes the incoming data: categorizing it with other members of its class, evaluating the knowledge according to our own particular priorities at the time, putting it into words. It is wise to see if others experience the same thing.

Distortion can occur when the object is not correctly experienced by the senses or reason and as a result what comes out is an opinion and not a fact or truth.

Take the case of abortion. A large number of people assert that the fetus is merely tissue, as much a part of the mother as her own appendix. Therefore, it can be removed with no more worry than any other justifiable operation. But how do they know? On what evidence is their opinion about this entity's non-humanity based? It's the product of two human cells; if you leave it alone, you don't expect to get a porcupine or a zebra in nine months. What is the fetus? Only the fetus can tell you, and it's not talking. Nor is there any litmus-paper test to tell when humanity "clicks on".

Does "He" Exist?

Then why the widely accepted opinion that abortion is not homicide? Because no one – not even the most ardent pro-lifer – wants an woman to suffer the torment of an unwanted pregnancy if there is any moral alternative. **We don't want the fetus to be human.** What are you killing when you kill a fetus? If the fetus is indeed human, that question becomes: do you want your child murdered by a competent hit man or by a bumbling amateur?

The biggest possibility of distortion and closed-mindedness at this stage comes from using **is** when we mean only **seems**.

Our opinions of objective reality will never be comprehensive. Part of the object will always elude even the most careful study and definition, and therefore at best our knowledge of things will remain always slightly inadequate. All we can hope to do is train ourselves to see and hear as carefully as we can, especially in very important issues – like the nature of a fetus, like the motivations of the people we meet, like the questions about God.

Consider

Some scientists say that human beings are nothing more than a complex collection of chemicals and electricity or merely a more highly evolved species of animal. If that is truth, however, one cannot criticize extermination camps, bombing civilian populations, or any other homicide. You cannot commit a crime against a bag of chemicals or a high level ape. The same is true of over-quickly categorizing a fetus as mere "tissue".

A man stumbling out of the desert can choose between a voluptuous harem girl or the village well to get a desperately needed drink. What might seem irresistibly valuable at one time is not at another. More painfully, our needs and self-protectiveness very often gives realities a value they don't objectively possess. An alcoholic thinks liquor is good for his depression; a boy or girl calls sex "making love" when it is really an act of selfishness. Abortion is judged moral simply because carrying the child nine months is too shameful to consider doing otherwise.

People call themselves "lazy" when they really mean they're unmotivated; they see no reason to do what they're expected to do. But if a self-styled "lazy" boy is told there was a porno movie in the next room, somehow he'd muster enough energy to overcome his supposed inertia.

If you call somebody "my chick", you'll treat her that way. If generals use the word "casualties" when they mean maimed and dead human beings, they can afford to be more callous. When a "pacification team" obliterates a village and its inhabitants in order to "secure" it, the process sounds almost noble. If you call a fetus "it" (because its sex has not yet determined), you find it easier to treat as an "it".

Opinion is an imperfect grasp of truth, and a wise man spends a lifetime looking and fine-tuning and at times even rejecting opinions. But that is what it means to be fully human. Neither apes nor computers experience confusion too often; only human beings do. Instead of black and white, single track certitudes, one has to get used to a world of multiple causes, to an imperfect grasp of data, to tentative conclusions and solutions which are certainly closed to the truth this time but which always leave more to discover. A high degree of probability is the best one can get.

How do I know that what I know is all there is to know of that which I know?

I Don't Want To Know

Some know nothing, understand nothing. Their eyes are shut to all seeing, their hearts to reason. A man who hankers after ashes has a deluded heart and is led astray. He will never free his soul to say, "What I have in my hands is a lie."

"Don't bother me with facts; my mind is already made up." You can't be forced to believe what you won't allow yourself to believe. The less you know, the more certain you can be; the less you know, the safer you are from discomforting truth – and growth. You are caught in yourself.

Existence

Consider the universe. It's undeniably there. But what caused it? There are only two possibilities: either some Mind intended it to exist and to exist in this way, or its existence and nature are the result of an infinite series of accidents.

It's pretty clear that the existence of things doesn't depend on me. The existence of things may come from God, or it may come about through evolutionary accident, but it's certain that it didn't come from me. I wasn't even there!

There are two important points. First, the thing either exists or it doesn't; there are no in-between, sort of realities. Second, my awareness doesn't make a reality exist, nor does my lack of awareness make a reality cease to exist.

One more absolutely essential point: first-hand evidence is not the only way of establishing reality's existence. Sometimes reasoning is the best we can get; sometimes we have to accept the testimony of others, and both reasoning and testimony are probable, not certain; they are acts of faith to some degree.

The idea of God is certainly real in the mind. No atheist would deny that. The question is whether God has any existence outside the mind.

Is God just another impractical question like ghosts and Martians, one that can get you scared in your off-moments, but whose existence outside the mind is merely an academic discussion? One can live life happily and prosperously without him. Is God actually "there" – as real (though not visible) – as atoms and love? Is it possible that the problem is not with God but with our vision?

Note: The Constitution doesn't give me the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; it acknowledges that I have those rights – because I am a human being. I have those rights whether the Constitution chose to acknowledge them or not; as a human being. I have them even if I live in Siberia or South Africa no matter what the accidental color of my skin or shape of my eyes or degree of my intelligence.

Morality is not based on laws; laws are based on morality, and morality is based on human nature. You can use a human being as a paperweight, or as a guinea pig, or as an entrée at dinner, but it's wrong simply because that is not what human beings are **for**. Whether one believes in God or not, an act is immoral **solely** because it is an act against human **nature** in both the perpetrator and the victim.

Does "He" Exist?

It is simply idiotic to say: morality is "up to the individual". The individual does not make unicorns or atoms or death or humanity or morality. It exists. The individual does not dictate the **natures** of unicorns or atoms or death or humanity. They come to us; we adapt to them. Awareness of morality may depend on the individual; he or she may be ignorant of it, or be self-blinded to it, but the existence and nature of morality doesn't vary from individual to individual. If you violate the truth – the nature of things – the truth will eventually rise up and take its revenge. And what about God?

No one has seen an atom, but atoms exist whether we want to acknowledge them or not. And their natures – the composition of the nucleus, the number of electrons, the way they interact – come **to** us. We may manipulate them, "tell them what to do", but only on **their** terms. We can't make them do things of which they're not capable, and we judge the nature of an atom by fiddling with it, and watching its effects, and reasoning to its nature from that.

Similarly no one has seen God, but if he exists, he comes to us on **his** terms. We don't dictate his nature or his likes and dislikes any more than we dictate the nature of humanity or the personalities of our friends. For one thing, he's the Host; he set up the party, supervised the decorations, invited each of us to attend, and – whether we like it or not – establishes the departure time when, for us, the party is over. None of us can complain that we have to leave the party. Who said we could come to the party in the first place?

There is a difference between the object itself (the primary reality) and our awareness of that object (the secondary reality). Religions all over the world and down the ages have perceived God in many different ways and through the prisms of their own cultures and times: very distant and aloof, very warm and near, unspeakably holy, tenderly merciful, and so on. The pagan aborigine has one vantage point, the Buddhist another; the speculative theologian sees him through his particular eyes, and the old charwoman through hers. But it is the same God.

Each of those perceptions of God – like all human perceptions – is inadequate to the reality it describes. But that does not diminish God. If he exists, he made us to find him. That's what we're here for.

Does God Exist and How Do I Know?

Either God exists outside the mind or he doesn't. There is no other alternative; you can't "sort of" exist, any more than you can be "sort of" pregnant or "sort of" dead.

Charles Darwin wrote: "...the whole subject is beyond the scope of man's intellect...The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble for us."

Darwin seems to be saying that, if God does indeed exist, we can know absolutely nothing of him, not even from his effects in the universe he created. He says that this inability springs not from any defect in God, but from the inability of the human "intellect".

Is it not true that man has a greater scope than just the intellect? Love, for example, is not rational. And yet it is neither irrational nor non-rational. Love is beyond the scope of man's intellect. It exists. It is a mystery. It is insoluble for us.

Man needs faith in order to express and nurture his love. Faith means an honest commitment of one's life, based on uncertain evidence. I do not know how much another person loves me – I must have faith in that person – I must have belief that it exists in that person.

If God exists he comes to us on his terms. God does exist when I need him and he exists when I think I don't need him. His existence does not depend upon my needs or experiences. He always is.

How do we know God? Well, how do we know we love someone? Does feeling, emotions, sentimentality indicate that I love a person? Are they the outward signs of love? If I believe in God, are there not some outward signs to indicate this? Otherwise, my belief in God is only an idea, not a reality.

Reason: My Intelligence

Start with something undeniable: I do most certainly have intelligence. Furthermore, that intelligence tells me, again undeniably, that **no effect can be greater than its cause or complex of causes**. Therefore, I apply that law of causality to three more undeniable facts: (a) my intelligence itself, (b) the universe, and (c) evolution.

- (a) My intelligence is an effect which came from some cause, and yet none of the lower "orders" at least seem to have it. Therefore, I can't understand how intelligence simply "boiled up" into me from any or all of them. I can't find sufficient cause for intelligence within this four-dimensional system.

I see power in chemicals and electricity, but I don't see in them the ability to change their minds, to rebel against their own natures; I don't expect water to change course uphill nor bricks to fly upward when dropped. And yet, human beings change course quite profoundly, and they have learned how to cheat gravity.

I see adaptability in plant cells, but I don't see in them a **choice** to change; they are bound to the iron law of physics and chemistry; I don't expect a violet to survive long enough unwatered in a dark and stifling place. And yet human beings who are just as needful of light and air and water can.

Does "He" Exist?

I see a kind of "intelligence", shrewdness, trainability in other animals, but I don't see any attempts in them to wrestle with such puzzles as the God questions; I don't expect a cow to write "Hamlet". And yet people do both.

It would be foolish to deny that there could not **be** some hitherto undiscovered power in matter of vegetation or animality to account for my speculative intelligence. If there weren't some possibility of some other answer, I would not be stuck with a calculated risk; I would have certitude. Till I get some clear evidence of that other possible cause, I am left with the conclusion that human beings must have gotten intelligence from some other Intelligence.

The effect eludes a mindless cause. To deny God, I have to deny the evidence of my own intelligence.

- (b) The **universe** looks remarkably ordered. I don't "impose" the periodic table on the physical cosmos; bits and pieces come **to** me, and I just slip them in the proper slots. Men and women who ought to know indicate that the laws of physics are everywhere the same. If at one extreme I look beyond the limits even of an electron microscope, what do I find? Each body turning on itself, two bodies flirt in attraction and repulsion about one another, and that pair moves about others, and that whole system moves about and through others in an infinitesimal but predictable dance. Fascinating. But then, if I go to the completely other extreme, beyond the limits of the most powerful radio-telescope, what do I find? The **same** dance! Bodies turning on themselves, revolving around others, and others, and so on. That's pretty impressive if there is no Choreographer!

Yet it is more intricate still. There is order; the rules of the dance are everywhere the same; the laws of physics. But there is also surprise. No two dancers are exactly alike: spirals and rings, raging hot and rigidly glacial, smooth and pocked, positive and negative and neutral. This is not the dead movement of machine-tooled spheres but an endlessly varied carouse. Order and surprise.

My intelligence boggles at such unvarying order and such capricious surprise resulting from an accident; getting **order** out of **chaos** without a Mind. Variety yes, but not immutable laws of physics, not the Periodic Table.

The effect eludes a mindless cause. To deny God, I have to deny the evidence of my own intelligence.

- (c) The theory of **evolution**, at least in its major outlines, is so well-evidenced that one would be a fool to deny it. What's more, unlike the stricter fundamentalists, I find in science in general and evolution in particular not only no threat to religion but a massive **support** to religion.

If you look at the progress of evolution, it appears to be an intricate **plan** working with infinite patience from one level to another and "finally" to us, to human beings. But to call it a "plan", you have already ruled out accident; there can't **be** a plan without a mind. To say that "natural selection" accounts for the survival of those varieties better suited for survival is at the very least an inaccurate use of the word "selection". If evolution is a series of mindless accidents, there can be no "selection". Only a mind can see alternatives and select among them.

Suppose by way of some time warp, you could be wafted back four billion years to a time when the

Does "He" Exist?

earth was still cooling. There are no mountains yet, no trees, no animals, no people. Just a rich lava soup. Could even the most brilliant physicist look at that molten sea and, with a straight face, say "Ah! Given enough time and good luck, I can see finally emerging from this soup Albert Einstein dreaming $e=mc^2$!"? My intelligence chokes on that one.

In **Cosmos**, Carl Sagan says, "One day, quite by accident, a molecule arose that was able to make crude copies of itself." Now that was **one** helluva shrewd molecule! In speaking of the herds of trilobites which teemed in the oceans five hundred million years ago he says, "They stored crystals in their eyes to detect polarized light." How did those trilobites "know" there was any light there to be detected, one wonders. Later he asserts, "Eyes and ears evolved, and now the cosmos could see and hear." Just like that! Dr. Sagan seems to imply that, because there is light, someone must see it. The logic escapes one, especially since there is much light (X-rays, gamma rays) we don't see, and since most occupants of this planet can't see at all. For me, the existence of the human eye alone is sufficient evidence of the existence of God.

I am stuck with a choice between two (and only two) mind-smashers: **either** there is an invisible Mind overwhelmingly more powerful than I, **or**, for "reasons" we can't fathom, order came out of chaos and entities achieved abilities (like sight) without any discernible cause – by sheer **chance**.

Sagan writes, " It is only by the most extraordinary coincidence that the cosmic slot machine has this time come up with a universe consistent with us." And with no one to insert the silver dollar and pull the lever! "Extraordinary" is far too puny a word!

To change the metaphor: picture the pieces of a clock all spread out helter-skelter on a bed sheet. Four people, one at each corner, throw the pieces up in the air an infinite number of times. What the atheist is expecting me to accept is that, given enough throws, part A will sooner or later attach itself to part B, and part A/B will attach itself to part C, and so on, till eventually you will have a clock in perfect working order. And it never needs rewinding. And the universe – or just the human eye alone – is immeasurably more complex than a clock. Perhaps that is possible, but it sure makes a God look like a far more likely answer.

The effect eludes a mindless cause. To deny God, I have to deny the evidence of my own intelligence.

Hungers/Curses

Besides the chemical and electronic juices in us, there are also hungers which we have discovered that every other human being seems to have: (a) the hunger for answers, (b) the hunger for permanence, and (c) the hunger for justice – at least for oneself. These hungers are so invariant that it seems undeniable that they are essential components of human **nature**.

- (a) **The Hunger for Answers.** More than any other question, I ask: **Why** should anyone suffer? Why must anyone live a few years as a youth and then die?

If there is no God, the only answer to those questions is, very simply: “That’s the way things **are**, Buster.” There are **no** answers. There are **no** reasons. Everything that happens is an accidental result of a mindless evolution. The intelligence that **drives** me to ask “why” is a curse, a lifelong frustration. It is very like being born hungry in a world where food did not exist.

To deny God, I have to accept that – alone among all the other natures on earth – the very intelligence that makes me human is a curse. I know no other entity in the universe so cursed by its very nature.

- (b) **The Hunger for Permanence.** I don’t want to die. No one does, even potential suicides, who don’t want to survive death. Something inside craves a place where everything is permanent – where friends do not move away and forget us, where love does not grow stale and die, where joy does not always fade slowly into boring routine or crash dramatically into pain.

Such a state of permanence will not come in this world. People are too free and contrary to allow it. But even if the Marxist dream were possible, it can’t possibly come in our lifetime.

People say that hunger **creates** the illusion of an afterlife. Perhaps. But if there is no one who can give us an afterlife, our hunger for permanence – like our hunger for answers – is a “natural” curse. The normal state of human life is an absurdity: hungering for answers that don’t exist and a permanence which is impossible. According to the law of the survival of the fittest, any entity with such hungers for “food” that doesn’t exist would long since have died out. Such unfulfilled hungers violate every other nature in the universe.

- (c) **The Hunger for Justice.** You don’t have to **teach** a little girl that, if her brother swipes her candy bar, she’s got a right to bop him. Maybe it takes more time to teach her that her brother also has right, but even a dog will let you know that you don’t mess with his bone. Children and animals have an inborn conviction about possessions. But no lioness recognizes that the right of a doe to feed her young is at least comparable to the right of the lioness to bring the doe home to feed her young.

I have an inner conviction that every human being has rights. My intelligence tells me that a child – any child, in any society, at any time in human history – is more important than a fifty dollar bill, more important than placating an angry idol, more important than holding back communism.

Obviously, this is not a morality **imposed** on me by my society; wince the American society has long tolerated, at least, the killing of children for “a higher purpose”. Yet my intelligence tells me that the child’s right to life is higher than my personal whim, higher than the temporary morals agreed

Does "He" Exist?

on by this or that society, higher even than "the way societies have felt through most of history."

But who can be above all that? Who could have made human beings in such a way that even a child has inborn human rights? Accident?

If it is not a God who arbitrates between our contradictory philosophies, if it isn't a Mind greater than all mankind put together, then **anything** goes. Hitler and I only have a legitimate difference of opinions.

To summarize: my natural powers are either sources of frustration or sources of growth. The first alternative flies in the face of all the evidence – including the very power with which I judge the evidence: my own intelligence. My intelligence can't accept an answer that says that very intelligence is a worse-than-useless curse.

All this is enough to convince us that God must exist. Note that it doesn't say "prove", but "convince". It is a calculated risk, with evidence enough sufficient to bet one's life on it!

About Brother Eugene Trzecieski



Eighty-two year old Marist Brother and teacher, Br. Eugene Trzecieski, has worked at Christopher Columbus High School for the last 43 years. Br. Eugene became a Marist Brother at age 17, as soon as he graduated from high school. He started his teaching career in 1950 at New York's St. Ann's Academy and later taught at Archbishop Molloy High School, NY, and worked at the Marist Brothers Training House in Esopus, NY, as the Director of Novices. Over the years he has served Columbus as Academic Dean, Treasurer, Teacher of Latin, Philosophy, Humanities, and English. He was also a key leader in Columbus extra-curricular activities, moderating the National Honor Society for 25 years, creating the school's Student Activities Committee, and founding the Columbus Arts Society for Adults and the Erasmus Culture Club for students. For years he also was in charge of the gardening and landscaping of the school's campus, a job he loved because of his great passion for nature.

Br. Eugene taught at Columbus from 1968 until 2010. Thousands of alumni from the last five decades remember him most for his famous 12thgrade "Philosophy of Being" class, which he taught for 43 years straight. In fact, Br. Eugene holds the title of the teacher who taught at Columbus for the most number of years. Many alumni will also remember that Br. Eugene enlivened the campus with his beloved pet, Brandy, a St. Bernard that won the hearts of all the students and became the school's mascot.

Although he no longer teaches, Br. Eugene is still very actively engaged at Columbus, handling all of the school's paper copying and keeping the school archives, a collection that he started in 1968 and that today contains hundreds of bound books and files which he neatly organizes. It was Br. Eugene who came up with the idea to publish the school's first history book to commemorate the school's 50th Anniversary in 2008. He wrote the book entitled "50 Years Exploring Christopher Columbus High School" with co-author and fellow teacher, Mr. John Lynskey.

Around Columbus Br. Eugene is respected and loved by faculty, alumni, and students. He is known as a wise and gentle man who is demanding, kind, and inspiring. He always referred to his students as gentlemen, and never found the need to send a student to detention. Early in his career he came up with a quote that he began teaching to his students; "A mind made noble, leads a noble life." It has been his motto ever since.