

THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

QUESTION: What is the Buddhist view of the origin of the universe?

Reverend Raido Hirota (RH): Unlike Christians, Jews and Muslims who attribute the creation of the world and the universe to God, Buddhists do not attribute it to Buddha, or to any deity or being. And keep in mind, Buddhists never compromise their own beliefs by adopting the views of others.

Charles Darwin's theories of adaptation and evolution explain that animals acquire body structures that enable them to adapt effectively to their habitat. For example, a giraffe has a long neck and legs so that it can easily reach its food at the tops of trees. Christians would say that the giraffe had long legs because God created it that way. These are the theories taught in Western culture -- their schools and their religions. Many scientists believe in the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of the universe, which states that all matter and energy in the universe was concentrated in a very minute but dense volume that exploded between 10 and 20 billion years ago, and that the resulting expansion continues today. Buddhism has never disputed this theory or said it is wrong, but we have no explanation. Many scientists accept or endorse the Big Bang theory, but they don't have an explanation for what happened before the big bang.

The central purpose of Buddhism is to teach people living now in the present (no matter when the present is) how to live. Many scientists are interested in life in the universe. But even if they discover the true origin of the universe or how it came into being, it will not save people. In a doctor's pursuit to understand the cause and circumstances of a person's death he will perform an autopsy, carving up the dead body, seeking exhaustively. And while he may learn the actual cause of death, no matter how exhaustively he searches the doctor will never find the essence, the soul, the mind, the spiritual heart of the person.

There is no Buddhist teaching on how the universe came into being. Even should you learn or know what caused the formation of the universe, it serves no purpose. It's not helpful. It has no value.

Believer 1: Isn't the original cause Namu-myoho-renge-kyo? Scientists cannot find the original cause through science. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo has always existed, so there is no creation. We don't believe in creation, do we? Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is the original cause and it is eternal.

RH: Density. The formation of life on this planet began with water -- the ocean -- whose density is present in the element of salt. Arising from this density is an amoeba, a single-celled organism. Amoebae engender algae; algae leads to the evolution of fish; fish lead to the evolution of land animals, which lead to the evolution of human beings. The density of the ocean water is of similar consistency and composition as human blood.

Buddhism does not have an explanation for how amoeba, human beings or any life-form or phenomenon came into existence. This is because firstly, there is no point in knowing. Secondly, Buddhism does not profess a creationist theory, therefore it does not have the burden, nor is it under any obligation to explain or defend the origin of the universe. Buddhism teaches about the spirit only. Buddhism explains that all life is connected to each other. Everything is equal to everything else -- to all life because Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is all life throughout the universe. It is life itself. In Christianity they say there was God. God had no connection to other life. There was only God. Then God created every single living thing.

Believer 1: Christians say God is up there and is almighty. Everyone else is below him. He is a separate being, and no one else can achieve his status. But Christians also say that God is in them -- that man was made in God's image. Everything is made in God's image.

Believer 2: Do they say that you should live as God wishes, the way God wants you to live?

Believer 1: They say human beings should live the way God wishes you to live.

Believer 2: If my child dies, it's because God wants it?

Believer 1: Yes, that's what they say.

Believer 2: And he will go to God's place in Heaven. Why does God want this little child?

Believer 3: They can't explain any of that.

Believer 2: Why is a baby born crippled or deformed?

Believer 3: Why are there different races if everybody is equal? They believe you have one life. If you have one life, and everybody is supposed to be equal and made in God's image, then why are there all these differences? All these inequalities: the rich vs. the poor; the infirmed and the robust; the intelligent and mentally challenged? Christianity doesn't make sense.

Believer 2: Some so poor and hungry. It's because God wants it to be this way.

Believer 4: Do some people believe in different gods?

Believer 1: I think the majority of people are mono-theists, believing in one God, the Supreme Being. The almighty. Then there are people like George Harrison of the Beatles who was eclectic in his beliefs and formulated his belief from many different faiths. God can be whatever you think he, it, she is. George Harrison believed God could be of many different stripes, not just the Christian stripe. Hindu and Yoga influenced Harrison. Hindus and other cultures also believe in a Supreme Being. Rather than seeking the truth, if you are a Buddhist they will say to you, Buddha is another name for God. If you want to call him Buddha, that's your choice.

RH: In Buddhism everything is contained within the Law of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Christians say that God is separate and distinct from everything else. Buddhism says that Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is everything, and everything is Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. There is no distinction -- no separation. It is all Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Everything is Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

Believer 2: Why is the Law everything?

RH: That is the teaching. That's how it is.

Believer 2: Why does it have to be Namu-myoho-renge-kyo? Why couldn't it be something else?

RH: The Lotus Sutra traveled from India to China to Korea to Japan. The title of the Lotus Sutra in India -- in Sanskrit -- is *Saddharma-pundirika sutra*. In China it was translated by Kumarajiva to *Miao-fa-lien-hua-ching*. In Korea it is similar to the Chinese. In Japan the title of the Chinese sutra was pronounced in Japanese as *Myoho-renge-kyo*. Nichiren Daishonin realized that the sound (the pronunciation) Myoho-renge-kyo is the supreme universal Law for everyone. In the chronology and history of this earth, the time was not right for this Law to be revealed until Nichiren Daishonin's advent.

Believer 2: Why is it still Namu-myoho-renge-kyo?

RH: There aren't different laws and different truths for everyone. If there were, there would only be utter chaos. There is only one Law that unifies all things. That Law is Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo qualifies as the most specific and definitive Law, encompassing and elucidating everything. And it came down from Shakyamuni.