

## 1. Is there more to life?

A friend was telling me a couple of years ago how his wife had got him a very special fortieth birthday present - it was the chance to drive a racing car round a racing circuit. It was looking good from the stand. His family was very impressed at the way he was handling the car. Wasn't he going fast! Then he got out and handed over the wheel to the resident, professional racing driver. And did he make that car go! When he was finished there was smoke coming from all four wheels. The difference was then obvious - and it put dad's performance into perspective. Even when life is good - even when we think we're performing well - it's still way short of life in all its fullness.

So could there be more to life than what you're already experiencing? - even when things are going well? Or, is this all there is, and anything beyond is just wishful thinking, mere escapism? I think there are times in all our lives when we simply can't escape 'the God question': does God really exist? For that's really what it boils down to, isn't it? That's really what we're asking when we allow ourselves to wonder if there's more to life. So, what are the clues?

Take the miracle of life itself. What happens in the labour ward is a big clue towards answering the God question. The arrival of a new life can dramatically re-focus our attention on something or someone greater than ourselves. The sight of that little wrinkled body can reduce a parent (or grandparent) to jelly as they're engulfed in waves of joy, gratitude and wonder. New parents caught up in the wonder of the moment are likely to 'ooh' and 'aah' at the tiny miracle of design before them, which turns their thoughts - however briefly - to the someone who made it all possible.

By this time the excitement has got a bit too much for poor old dad. He takes a walk outside to compose himself in the cool night air. He looks up and sees the stars twinkling like diamonds in the night sky. Wait a minute - isn't that another clue that somebody's out there. Just like a tiny baby's body, our planet too, and our solar system, our galaxy, even the universe beyond, are all filled with a sense of purpose and finely balanced design. Three centuries ago, an all-round scientist, called Leibniz, said our world was the best of all possible worlds. During the 300 years since, science has been finding out more and more reasons to support his view that the earth is exceptional. For a start, it's just the correct distance from the sun to keep temperatures on earth broadly-speaking in the range from 0 to 40 degrees which are the narrow limits required to sustain life as we know it. But the earth also spins on its axis at just the correct speed to even out temperature differences between day and night. And the length of the year suits our cycles of sowing and reaping. The earth is also just the correct size to allow it to retain its atmosphere, unlike the moon. And if our atmosphere had a lower or higher percentage of oxygen we'd either have a job getting a fire to light or a job putting it out! Above all our planet's a watery planet which is all-important, since without water no life of any kind could exist. Compared to the hot gases of the stars or the deeply frozen outer planets, we realize again just what a special place earth is. It's got to be a clue, hasn't it?

But even if we can put all this down to being just incredibly good luck, the next challenge we face, as we revel in our good fortune, is where our emotions come from, or come to think of it: where our conscience comes from too? Feelings of pity for others or concern at injustice could never have been essential, or even helpful, if we're thinking purely in terms of survival following some chance beginning. Some folks may say that what seems like an inbuilt sense of fair play or whatever has just come about by social conditioning. But, hey, doesn't that just push the problem back one stage further? If others have conditioned us, where did they get these ideas from in the first place?

What's more, and perhaps the most telling clue of all, is that humans always seem to have had a suspicion that there's a God of some sort. Ancient burial sites very often turn up some religious artefacts or show some attempt at preparation for an afterlife.

Even the fact that our reflexes lead us to call out to God when we're in danger - or blame Him when things go wrong - seems to underline the likelihood of his existence. If there's no God, how come we've invented the idea?