

# Quantum Nothingness and Mystery of Mysteries: Lawrence Krauss and Ibn Arabi on the Likelihood of Existence for Absolute and the Multiverses

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**Abstract:** Why is there something rather than nothing? Or why is there anything at all? Thousands of years religions came up with the answer. This fundamental question has been raised by a range of philosophers and physicists. With the advent of Quantum Mechanics, scientists came up with a new answer that explains how the universe could come into existence without any intervention from any transcendental or immanent divine reality. Ibn Arabi's cosmology dealt with transcendental or immanent divine reality of existence in a unique way which successfully formulated a comprehensive answer to the philosophical doubt of Muslim scholars in the medieval period of Islam. This unique way of dealing with existence lies with Taoist teaching also as Japanese scholar Izutsu shows in his works. This research uses qualitative methodology to understand the existence of the universe and God. The limitation of research is that secondary data has been used to comprehend the problem of existence. This research finds that early Neoplatonist thought and modern thought on the existence of God and the Universe have unique ways to deal with similar topics. Proponents of New atheism negate the existence of God in cosmology through an evolutionary process from nothing (quantum vacuum) whereas Mystics of religions affirm the existence of God in Cosmology through an evolutionary process from the Absolute (Mystery of mysteries).

**Keywords:** Avijit Roy, New Atheism, Existence of Allah, Quantum Nothingness, Ibn Arabi, Lawrence Krauss, Mystery of Mysteries, Absolute, Lao-tzu, Scientific Worldview, Izutsu, Muhammad Bukhari Lubis, Scientism.

## 1. Introduction

I (Maruf) am writing this research paper from a blank page. I am using Microsoft Office. Apparently, it seems blank as I write, yet there was an enormous effort by programmers to create this blank state. I can claim that I have written something out of nothing (blank page). This is not the case for the Universe as far as New Atheism is concerned. Now imagine the property of nothing in outside of our universe came from no programmer/designer/God. Then, I, an outsider jot down my ideas in blank page, but universe itself formed and produced this enormous matter and 'us' till today. It has been done without any divine intervention for over 14 billion years approximately. This research paper would deal with existence of God in Abrahamic religious scriptures, then, philosophical

concept of 'Absolute' and then finally it will discuss about modern concept of nothing that New Atheism is discussing about to negate the existence of God.

## 2. The Notion of God in Abrahamic Religions

This section would briefly touch upon Abrahamic concept of Thorne and oneness God. Judaism, Christianity and Islam promotes monotheism strictly. The book of Isaiah states,

'God sits on his throne above the circle of the earth, and compared to him, people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the skies like a piece of cloth and spreads them out like a tent to sit under.' (Isaiah 40:22)<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 1. Portrayal of Biblical God [ Please note that this is not a proper representation as artists do for Abrahamic God. Unlike Hinduism (philosophically Hindu scriptures are more advanced as seen in Western philosophical works like Arthur Schopenhauer and others, not like Greek mythology) or the Greek concept of mythical Gods and Goddesses, Abrahamic religions strictly coherent not to portray God's image due to God's absolute and unknowable characteristics]

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Fig. 2. Portrayal of Christian God [ Please note that this is not a proper representation as artists do for Abrahamic God. Unlike Hinduism or the Greek concept of mythical Gods and Goddesses, Abrahamic religions strictly coherent not to portray God's image due to God's absolute and unknowable characteristics]

Photo Credit for both pictures: Throne of God. (2024). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne\\_of\\_God#:~:text=In%20Isaiah%206%2C%20Isaiah%20sees.and%20with%20two%20they%20flew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_of_God#:~:text=In%20Isaiah%206%2C%20Isaiah%20sees.and%20with%20two%20they%20flew)

In Islam, Quran also talks about throne of Allah, the Most Compassionate, 'Who is' established on the Throne.<sup>ii</sup> (Al-Quran 20:5)

It is evident that Allah or God in Abrahamic Religions established on the Throne. Now the question is who God or Allah is. What is He made of? Is He immanent or transcendent or he is both at the same time? When prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked the same question, chapter 112 was revealed to describe the ultimate characteristics of Allah as unknowable and can't be compared with others in this entire universe. Quran says,

Say, 'O Prophet,' "He is Allah—One 'and Indivisible'; Allah—the Sustainer 'needed by all'. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him." (Quran 112:1-4)<sup>iii</sup>

During prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the topic was not discussed further. However, when Muslim scholars get introduction with Greek philosophy through translation. The problem started to arise. Next section would deal with Ibn Arabi's thought on Absolute.

### 3. Ibn Arabi's Influence of Neoplatonist Thought on Explaining the Characteristics of Absolute and the Process of Evolutionary Universe

We learned about Muslim Neoplatonists from the work, "*the Brethren of Purity*" (Ikhwan al-Safa).<sup>iv</sup> The authors are unknown, but we see the real influence in the work of Ibn Arabi. Ibn Arabi was smart enough to deal with the inherent problem of philosophy with his mystic teaching. When philosophy and theology were lost proving existence of God and Universe. E.g. the philosophical fallacy of Aristotelian logic by putting full

stop in first cause and necessity being or if the universe is eternal or had beginning. Ghazali simply passed by indicating the problem as heretical. Ibn Arabi did not fall into that trap. He in fact gave the most comprehensive answer on the existence of God and universe by providing in details explanation on the planes of existence. For example, Izutsu states that Ibn Arabi talks about 5 Planes of Being,

1. The Plane of Essence (the absolute Mystery, abysmal Darkness)
2. The plane of the Divine attributes and the names (the stage of divinity)
3. The Plane of the divine actions, The presence of Lordship (*rububiyah*)
4. The plane of images and imagination (*khayal*)
5. The plane of the senses and sensible world

Izutsu did comparison right after referring Ibn Arabi's philosophy on existence. Interestingly Lao-tzu also talked about nothing and how evolution of universe took place from Absolute. He talks about 1. Mystery of Mysteries 2. Non-being (Nothing, or Nameless) 3. One 4 Being (Heaven and Earth) 5. The ten thousand things (Multiplicities).<sup>v</sup>

Unlike Hallaj or Imam Ghazali, Ibn Arabi's concept of God's existence carries very significance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Neither Hallaj nor Ghazali went so far as to explain the nature of existence. He in fact describes the entire process of existence.

Martin Heidegger or Jean-Paul Sarte's question of being and nothing probably would be considered as a modern version of an explanation for existence. However, early mystics in different civilizations also were concerned on this topic. Quantum mechanics is very recent addition. It is like mystics uses religious and philosophical teaching to explain the essence and existence in the past and proponents of New Atheism uses physics, Quantum Mechanics and philosophy (which they deny confessing) to explain essence and existence.

This research would use secondary source to draw the picture on essence and existence of God. Toshihiko Izutsu was famous Japanese academician on Taoism and Islamic Mysticism. He wrote a book entitled, '*Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts of Ibn Arabi and Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu*'. He discussed in details about the concept of *Absolute*. When he compares Sufism and Taoism under the subtitles (III The Multistratified structure of Reality; IV Essence and Existence), he talked about the nature Absolute/Nothing.<sup>vi</sup> For example, Izutsu states, "The absolute and ultimate ground of Existence is in both Sufism and Taoism the Mystery of Mysteries. The latter is, as Ibn 'Arabi says, the *anker al-nakirat* 'the most indeterminate of all indeterminates'; that is to say, it is Something that transcends all qualifications and relations that are humanly conceivable. And since it is transcendent to such a degree, it remains for ever unknown and unknowable. Existence per se is thus absolutely inconceivable and inapproachable. Ibn Arabi refers to this aspect of Existence by the word '*ghayb*, 'concealment' or 'invisibility'. In the Taoist system, it is *hsuan* or Mystery that is the most proper word for referring to this absolutely transcendent stage of Existence."<sup>vii</sup> Yet there is some explanation from them about this invisibility of nothingness like the proponents of nothing in

Quantum Field. Izutsu states, “Actually it is still ‘Nothing’, but potentially it is all things. [as is Multiverses can come up from Quantum Fluctuation of Nothingness] There is at least a vague and indistinct feeling that something is about to happen. And this is the ‘positive’ aspect of the Mystery, the face of the Absolute turned toward the world of creation. Ibn Arabi conveys the same idea by the expression: ‘hidden Treasure’, which has taken from a Tradition. And it is of the very nature of the ‘hidden treasure’ that is ‘loves to be known’. It is, however, at the stage of divine Names and Attributes in terms of Ibn Arabi’s worldview that is ‘love of being known’, i.e. the inner ontological drive of Existence, becomes actualized.”<sup>viii</sup>

The concept of Wahdatul Wujud (The Unity of Existence) was propounded by Ibn Arabi which is evolutionary philosophy from Absolute. Malaysian Scholar Haji Muhammad Bukhari Lubis explained the ocean of unity (Wahdatul Wujud) referring Hamzah Fansuri who was strong advocate of Ibn Arabi’s philosophy giving example of sea water.<sup>ix</sup> This book is part of his PhD dissertation at University of California at Berkley in 1989.

For instance, Lubis quoted wujidi poetry from Fansuri  
 “The sea is always the same, when it heaves, then it becomes waves.

People call it ‘waves,’ but in reality it is the sea....

For sea and waves are not separate.”<sup>x</sup>

Labus also states, “Hamza Fansuri not only explicitly interprets *ana al haqq* in the sense of *wahdatul wujud* but he also advises people not to be afraid of uttering such statement:

‘You should drift in the Most High Ocean

Do not be confused by the life of forms

Say “I am the Truth”, do not be afraid

It means the wave becomes the Ocean.”<sup>xi</sup>

This is to mention that Nuruddin al-raniri influenced sultan Mahkota Alam to burn the books of Hamzah Fansuri.

“After the King ordered them many times to repent [ of the infidelity of believing in the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujud, they did not want at all to repent until they fought the King’s messengers. Therefore, the King commanded that such people must be killed and all books written by their teachers [Hamzah and Syamsuddin] be collected in the center of a mosque which is named Baiturrahman. Further, he ordered to burn all of the books”<sup>xii</sup>

The conflict of Islamic thought always was challenged in Muslim history. This is not our point of discussion. To cite an example to understand mystic evolution of existence from absolute think about your favorite last scene of Titanic movie. The director decided to extend the last scene. Jack is unconscious now holding the wood and Rose is only one conscious on the wood. These two couple only in the middle of Atlantic Ocean. All dead bodies and Titanic drowned already. Rose notice at her night vision that the night Atlantic Ocean has started to be wild with strong wind. The mountainous waves are rising from ocean. The waves that Rose observe now in the middle of Atlantic Ocean are arising from sea water. The entire existence we observe or talk about be it multiverses, or our universe, heaven or hell, Thorne, the concept of Lord sitting on that throne, all are part of waves from sea. The Mystery of

mysteries means the sea and the mountainous waves that Rose observes are mere surface of ocean water. That’s why it is impossible for any human to know the mystery of mysteries (The absolute). Also, whatever we observe in this universe, it came like wave from universal existence, and it will be vanished with universal existence. This universe is nothing but deception like wave. Also, you can think about the morning lake in village in which there is no wave. That was the point for Ibn Arabi’s conception. Waves of existence only came when Allah loved to be known.

Hence, it is imperative that there was an evolution of thought regarding existence from religious and philosophical teaching among early scholars in different parts of the world. The next section will deal with quantum nothingness from which this universe and possibly multiverses have the inevitable potential to advent.

#### 4. Absorbing Quantum Nothingness for New Atheism from Scientific Worldview

Since the appearance of Krauss’s ‘*A Universe from Nothing*’, science seems property of New Atheism. Science is universal knowledge and secular as argued by almost everyone. Yet the trend seems to go towards New Atheism. Science maintains hardcore logic using mathematical calculations. Hence, only scientists can challenge other scientists through the means of mathematics and experimental evidence since that is the most appropriate way to challenge any new model. Abdus Salam, Pakistani theoretical physicist, asked to refrain to Muslim scholars not to use sophistry to relate with Quranic teaching. In Foreword of Hoodbhoy book, Abdus Salam states criticizing Nasr and Sardar, “he is right that Nasr and Sardar are doing a great disservice to science in Muslim countries if they are calling for a religiously and not culturally motivated ‘Islamic science’, whatever that means. There is only one universal science, its problems and modalities are international and there is no such thing as Islamic science just as there is no Hindu science, no Jewish science, no Confucian science, nor Christian science [ No New Atheism science either he would extend if he lived till this time].<sup>xiii</sup> I had to distinguish between science and scientific worldview at my previous paper to comprehend the trend of New Atheism.<sup>xiv</sup> Stephen Jay Gould also advocated this approach though there is refutation on this view by Dawkin and others. Same case applies to Christian or other religious scholars across the world. Yet there is malpractice in this area. If epistemology is subjected to questions, it seems like conspiracy theorists in post-modern world to make things ambiguous and doubtful. This is not the intention of this research paper, rather this research would only try to understand the evolution of thought in the field of knowledge regarding existence to non-existence of Abrahamic God.

Let’s try to understand Quantum nothing to understand why Krauss think that God is not necessary for the universe to exist. Krauss states in his book, ‘*A Universe from Nothing*’, “Philosophers, theologians, and sometimes scientists continue to debate these possibilities. We do not know for certain which of them describes our universe, and perhaps we shall never know. But the point is, as I emphasized at the very beginning of

this book, the final arbiter of this question will not come from hope, desire, revelation, or pure thought. It will come, if it ever does, from an exploration of nature...And here, I think it is extremely significant that a universe from nothing—in a sense I will take pains to describe—that arises naturally, and even inevitably, is increasingly consistent with everything we have learned about the world. This learning has not come from philosophical or theological musings about morality or other speculations about the human condition. It is instead based on the remarkable and exciting developments in empirical cosmology and particle physics that I have described.”<sup>xv</sup>

Let's look at nothing in Quantum Vacuum

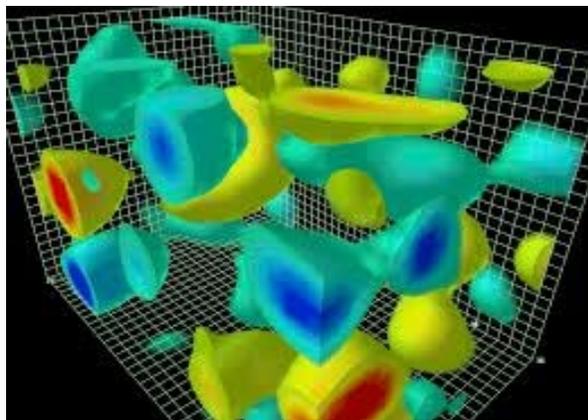


Fig. 3. Visualization of a quantum field theory calculation showing virtual particles in the quantum vacuum. (Specifically, for the strong interactions.)

Even in empty space, this vacuum energy is non-zero

[Source: (N.d.). Retrieved from <https://medium.com/starts-with-a-bang/this-is-why-quantum-field-theory-is-more-fundamental-than-quantum-mechanics-b37c5e05ed0d>]

Let's look at below image for multiverses that can arise from a quantum vacuum as scientists predict:



Fig. 4. Nothingness and Inevitability of Multiverses crafted from Quantum Vacuum

Source: Author, N. (2017). Taking the multiverse on faith. Retrieved from <https://physicsworld.com/a/taking-the-multiverse-on-faith/>

In our daily experience, when we say nothing, we probably look at empty space that we see. Something means we understand the matter we usually observe. This is common for every one of us. The empty space that we think of as nothing is

full of radiation and matters and other forces. However, when Krauss talked about nothing it is outside of our universe. Look at those bubble-like universes in figure 4. Outside of those universes you can observe the blackness. Those are considered nothing. This nothing got power of infinite possibility to create bubble. Think about cooking rice on the stove. What happens when it is hot and about to cook? We notice water bubbles coming up. The empty space outside universe is like that in a way full of potentiality to create bubble. That's how the possibility of multiverses raised in scientist minds. Our universe can be created without any intervention of divine God just simply following this strategy. That is what New Atheism is trying to convince using scientific theories.

## 5. Conclusion

Ibn Arabi developed his thought about the existence of Allah using neo platonism thought. Arabi's thought perfectly suits some of the ambiguous statements regarding existence of Allah in Quran. Quran usually silent or too abstract when it speaks about existence of Allah. The plane of existence explained how evolution of existence is an ongoing process since the beginning of creation. On the other hand, New Atheism addressed how a universe can come from nothing without Abrahamic God. You do not need Abrahamic God to explain the creation of multiverses. Nothing is quite sufficient to create those universes. A God sitting on chair on sky means that God and sitting chair must be evolved from that nothingness via quantum fluctuation. Is not it? Who is powerful then? The God sitting in chair or unstable nothingness? These are the questions from New atheism perhaps. Similarly, again the question comes how that nothingness even exists? Or what caused that nothingness to come into existence? [Avijit Roy raised same question<sup>xvi</sup> but proponents of scientific worldview usually puts 'what' caused that nothingness because for them 'who' question is silly question since again the question would come what caused such God to exist? In the past when our ignorant ancestors did not know or could not explain anything, they associated with God. God is ignorance of their knowledge. Then, scientists say 'we do not know', with this they actually try to distinguish between past people's mythological belief]. Or should we pause like mystics like Mysteries of mystery?

Both fields are quite thought provoking for future researchers to investigate perhaps. The limitation of this research is that this study only investigates superficially at face value using secondary data. Future researchers need to delve into the topic since New Atheism is troublesome for every religious doctrine in 21<sup>st</sup> century. For centuries, 3 Abrahamic faiths have history of conflict as we observe till today in Palestine, but now situation is perhaps coming like a Jews, a Christian and a Muslim educated young boys came out at night and gather in the abandoned desert in Sahara. All stare at night sky helplessly in silence. An astronomer(student) from MIT appears silently next to them through teleportation and smiles at those young boys and he sets his telescope for star gazing just to ridicule them.

To conclude, let's look at Below Figure 5-8 Avijit Roy's Brilliant summary for the development of science and scientific

worldview: [First Development: Aristarchus of Samos first began to propose his theories on how the Earth moves. Last Development: Witten and Townsend introduce M-theory revolution in superstring theory].

এক নজরে আনো হতে চনা আঁধারের যাত্রী রা

c. 280 BC	Aristarchus of Samos first began to propose his theories on how the Earth moves.	
120	Ptolemy published a book about how the Heavens work.	
1543	Nicolaus Copernicus published a book about how the Earth moves.	
1600	Giordano Bruno was declared a heretic and burned at the stake for supporting Copernicus's theory.	
1609	Johannes Kepler discovered the laws guiding the movement of the planets.	
1610	Galileo Galilei discovered four large moons around Jupiter.	
1687	Isaac Newton proposed the law of gravitation.	
1787	Charles Augustin de Coulomb discovered electrical force proportional to product of charges and inverse square of distance.	

Fig. 5.

Source: Roy, Avijit (n.d.). *Alo Haate Choliyache Adharer Jattri* (Translation: *The passenger of darkness has been walking with Candle*). [www.mukto-mona.com](http://www.mukto-mona.com). (Ebook)

1847	Christian Doppler discovered the Doppler Effect.	
1850	Rudolf Clansius devised generalized second law of thermodynamics.	
1864	Max Planck devised a way to calculate electromagnetic waves.	
1886	Michelson-Morley experiment carried out.	
1900	Max Planck devised the Planck constant for quantum mechanics.	
1905	Albert Einstein announces his special theory of relativity and light quanta.	
1913	Niels Bohr discovers the structure of atoms applies to quantum theory.	
1915	Einstein announced his general theory of relativity.	
1921	Theodor Kaluza announced the Kline model.	

Fig. 6.

Source: Roy, Avijit (n.d.). *Alo Haate Choliyache Adharer Jattri* (Translation: *The passenger of darkness has been walking with Candle*). [www.mukto-mona.com](http://www.mukto-mona.com). (Ebook)

1926	Werner Heisenberg proposed the matrix dynamics.	
1926	Erwin Schrodinger devised wave mechanics.	
1929	Edwin Hubble discovered the Universe is expanding.	
1930	Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, formulated maximum mass theoretically possible for a stable white dwarf.	
1931	Paul Dirac predicted the existence of monopoles, proposed quantum electromagnetics.	
1948	George Gamow calculated the element synthesis of the Big Bang.	
1954	Jan Mills devised the gauge theory based on quantum mechanics.	
1960		

Fig. 7.

Source: Roy, Avijit (n.d.). *Alo Haate Choliyache Adharer Jattri* (Translation: *The passenger of darkness has been walking with Candle*). [www.mukto-mona.com](http://www.mukto-mona.com) (e-book)

	Allan Sandage and others discovered a quasar.	
1963	Murray Gell-Mann and George Zweig discovered the quark model.	
1965	Peter Higgs and other discovered 3-K radiation.	
1967	Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking announced their black hole singular theory.; Anthony Hewish and Jocelyn Bell discovered a pulsar.	
1968	Stephen Weinberg and Abdus Salam announced their theory of unified weak electromagnetic power.	
		
1974	Sheldon Glashow announced the grand unified theory.	
1974	Hawking announced his theory that black holes give off radiation.	
1980	Alan Guth proposed inflation theory.	
1985	Edward Schwartz and Michael Green proposed the Superstring theory.	
1995	Witten and Townsend introduce M-theory revolution in superstring theory.	

Figure 8

Source: Roy, Avijit (n.d.). *Alo Haate Choliyache Adharer Jattri* (Translation: *The passenger of darkness has been walking with Candle*). [www.mukto-mona.com](http://www.mukto-mona.com) (e-book)

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- <sup>vi</sup> *Ibid*, p-479-485
- <sup>vii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 486
- <sup>viii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 487-88
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- <sup>x</sup> *Ibid*, p. 287
- <sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*, p. 304-305
- <sup>xii</sup> *Ibid*, p.280
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