What is the Meaning of Life?
Program 25
Evidence for God's Existence - The Cosmos
by Ernest O'Neill

Why are you alive? Why are you here? What's the explanation?
We used to have French conversation during our teenage years at school. A French mistress that we had, frustrated us continually by asking a certain question after we had produced what we thought was a magnificent explanation of a passage in a book that we had read.

The question that she would ask, probably in much better French than I am producing at this moment, she would simply say, "Pourquoi?" We hated that question! We hated it because it was a question that required a much more complex answer than we were able to produce in our halting French. It required a certain control of syntax and vocabulary that we had great trouble, in our stage of development, producing.

"The question, of course, that she asked, "Pourquoi?" was the question "Why?". That's the word "why" in French. We hated that question, because that's the most difficult question to answer. It requires the greatest thought and reflection, and it usually requires some refinement of language to do it justice. So, we detested that question when she put it.

The "why" questions are always the most difficult ones to answer. The "how" questions are much easier to answer. Of course, the "how" questions are the questions that our scientific endeavors have concentrated upon during the past fifty years. We have been able to give very detailed explanations of how we think the world came to be as it is today. So, we have the evolutionary hypothesis, which suggests that simple forms have developed into more complex forms over the years.

But, the "why" questions are very difficult. Why are we here? We know that perhaps life evolved from a single-cell amoeba, or perhaps it evolved after a "big bang" created it. We do not know the thing that originated the first thing that evolved. Above all, we do not really know why it exists, or why it originated, or why there was such direction inside the evolutionary process. That we cannot answer. Yet, that is the most significant question, because all of us are preoccupied with that question at some point in our lives.

We only succeed in escaping it by dint of putting part of our minds asleep. We all wonder, Now, why am I here? What's the point of this life? Is it just to eat and drink and sleep? Is it just to get an education so that I can bring other children into an equally meaningless world? Why are we here?

Many of us, of course, have given up on that question and have said, "There is no meaning to life. There is no meaning. Look at the chaos. Look at the bombings. Look at the explosions. Look at the way we're tearing each other apart. Look at the purposelessness of good lives being destroyed by drugs. There is no sense of life."

Yet, as we have been sharing over the past month, there is a great deal of evidence in our world to suggest that there is purpose in it. We see a great deal of purpose in the way the birds fly south in the winter. We see a great deal of purpose in the way a seed is put into the ground at planting time and is able to germinate. We see a great deal of purpose and order and design in the way the rain falls and causes the crops to grow, the way the sun shines at the right time, so that we are able to harvest the crops, and are able to eat the food.

We see a great deal of purpose and order and design in the way food comes into our body, and is broken up inside and becomes strength and life and physical nourishment for us. We see a great deal of purpose in the

way our heart beats. We see a great deal of purpose in the way the blood circulates and takes away the impurities.

We see purpose in the way the planets orbit and rotate. We see how the rotation of our world causes night and day, how the revolution of our world brings us seasons. We see a great deal of purpose in the pressure of our air, which is exactly right for us. We see purpose in the mixture of our air which enables us to breathe. Everywhere we look, we see order and design and purpose, and we are driven just like men like Einstein and Darwin have been driven, to see that even though we're explaining how the world might have developed, we have to posit the existence of some intellect or mind that is at least as great as our own and created the world at the very beginning.

We even see purpose and design in the sense of moral obligation we have in our own lives. We find it easier to kill each other, to be angry with each other, to lose our temper, than it is to keep our temper, and to preserve each other, and to give the other person the right to their way. Yet, there is something in us that constantly makes us feel that it is right to give the other person their way. It is right to preserve other people's lives. It is right not to lose our temper. It is right not to get angry. So, there is purpose and design that we can see even in our sense of moral obligation and conscience.

In other words, there are many things in our world to suggest to us that there is a lot of circumstantial evidence that shows us that there is purpose and order and design throughout our world. There is a great deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that the only explanation of the order and purpose and design that we see around us, is that someone, some being, some Supreme Being, put order and design and purpose into our world. That's why we are able to discover purpose and design and order when we study it from a scientific viewpoint.

Many of us have come to that place, where we say, "Even though we do not know why we are here, wherever we look, we can see that there is reason for things. There is reason for our world being as it is. There is every reason to believe that on the circumstantial evidence that we have at our disposal, there must be a Supreme Being. There must be a mind or an intellect that originated the whole show at the start."

Of course, that's very different from saying, there is empirical evidence; there is touch-and-see proof that such a Being exists. That is a very different matter. When we come to that question, then we are beginning to get near the heart of that question, "Why are we alive?"

In other words, because many of us accept the circumstantial evidence for the existence of God that Darwin and Einstein put forward, yet we question and we wonder, because of that evidence, "Is there any hard, touch-and-see empirical evidence, that there is such a Being?"

We've got as far as calling ourselves theists -- people who do believe that there must be a Supreme Being somewhere. Like Darwin, we accept, as he concluded in his "Origin of Species", that there is a great beauty, and a grandeur, in the way that the world has developed. There is a great deal of beauty in the way this whole thing has been brought about and has evolved.

Yet, with Darwin, we say there must be a Creator who started this whole thing in the first place. As with Einstein, we see that there is order and design, and conclude with him, that there has to be a mind that has produced this order and design. We accept that the existence of a God is the most probable explanation for the order and design in the universe, and of our own personalities. Yet, we feel, "Now, wait a moment. If there is such a Being, and He has created us for some purpose, then surely He must have expressed Himself directly in some way, if He actually exists."

In other words, surely in some way He has tried to get through to us. If He's out there in outer space somewhere, surely He has attempted to communicate with us in some fashion. So, we are driven to believe that there must be some empirical, touch-and-see evidence that such an intelligent Being exists. Is there any? Let's talk a little further about this next day.