

# Does GOD exist?

“Does God exist?  
– it all depends  
on where we are  
standing as to  
what kind of  
answer we get”

## John Rowan uses Ken Wilber's theories regarding levels of consciousness to explore how we know whether God exists

This short article is based on the theory of Ken Wilber that we are all on a path of psychospiritual development which has certain well-known way-stations. He first started writing about this in 1979, but has disowned some of his early formulations. He is now on to 'Wilber 5' and this shows a certain humility and ability to respond to criticism. If you want to read him, I suggest his book *The Eye of Spirit*<sup>1</sup> as the best place to start.

Recently I have been applying his latest views to a study of Zen Koans<sup>2</sup>, and a few years ago to a study of meaning, both of which turned out rather well and were published. What about applying it to this bigger idea?

The lowest level of consciousness he writes about, he calls the Magic/Mythic, and it is a level which has not yet discovered science or logic, or actively rejects them. There is a great deal of fear at this level – including fear of others with different views. At this level we would answer – 'Of course God exists – all our teachers and leaders say so. Anyone who says otherwise is dangerous.'

The next level he talks about, he calls the Mental Ego. This is the level most of us are familiar with, because it surrounds us on all sides. It has caught up with science and logic, but socially it stops short at roles and self-images. These are highly approved and rewarded. Some people at this level believe in God, others do not. But other people are tolerated as being entitled to their beliefs, no matter how strange, so long as they do not threaten others. This is the level at which it seems right to build places of worship, schools, hospitals and other good works. At this level we might say – 'I would not presume to be dogmatic about this, but I personally do (or do not) believe in God.'

The level which follows, he calls the Centaur, because at this level we start to believe in body-mind unity. We start to escape from formal logic, and to be more interested in dialectical logic, sometimes called vision-logic. At this level we discover authenticity, the real self and the existential edge. We see through our own eyes, not through the eyes of others. At this level we may say – 'It is my choice whether to believe in God or not, and

it is an important choice, because it makes a difference to the meaning of my life. I am seriously working on it.'

The next level, he calls the Subtle. It is the stage of development where we decide that we are spiritual beings. It is the realm which Jung has described so well, replete with symbols and images and other concrete representations of the divine. At this level we may say – 'I believe in the divine, essentially multiple and uncontainable'. If one believes in one God, one will actually have visions of that God, and perhaps voices too.

The next level is named as the Causal. It represents the deep ocean of mysticism, where there are no signposts, no handrails, no landmarks, nothing to hang onto. There are no problems at this level. At this stage one may say – 'I don't believe in God – I know God.' And some mystics have said – 'I am God.' Some psychotic people have also said this, of course.

So when we ask the question – 'Does God exist?' – it all depends on where we are standing as to what kind of answer we get.

### Biography

**John Rowan** has been working in the transpersonal field for many years, and has been described as one of the founding fathers of the transpersonal in this country. His book *The Transpersonal* is now in its second edition. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and also of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. He has meditated every morning since 1982.



### References

- 1 Wilber K. *The eye of spirit: an integral vision for a world gone slightly mad*. Shambala publications Inc. (Third revised edition). 2001.
- 2 Rowan J. Koans and levels of consciousness. *The international journal of transpersonal studies*. 2010; 29(1):12-17.