

# Reductive Analysis of Selected Arguments against the Existence of God

## (A Perspective Essay)

Elvis Omondi Kauka

Department of Educational Foundations, University of Kabianga, Kenya

**Abstract:** The purpose of this Perspective Essay was to logically examine and rebut some of the common arguments posited by Atheists against the existence of God. The essay is purely philosophical. The critical tool of discourse is Deductive argumentation. The essay infers that appealing to the existence of evil as proof against God's existence is a weak argument based on a faulty conception of the term 'evil'. It also deduces that what an Atheist calls biblical contradictions are not in the strictest sense contradictions. Lastly, the argument that God's existence is impossible due to the immorality of those who believe in God is not tenable because God's existence and his nature do not include human conduct.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The proposition 'God does not exist' is an extraordinary claim. It implies an in-depth discourse replete with evidence and logical reasoning that is beyond simple apprehension and comprehension. Therefore, the atheist or any person who claims the anti-God statement must be a reasonable person capable of defending the position of God's non-existence by appealing to evidence and logic. This paper examines some of the evidence and logic behind the proposition of non-belief in God through Reductive reasoning

### II. THE CONCEPTS OF ATHEISM AND GOD

Although anyone, for the sake of mental exercise can utter the statement 'God does not exist', the atheist holds it beyond the simple reasoning exercise because it is an existential issue rooted in the belief of an Atheist. There are two concepts tied to this assertion which need serious consideration. These are: 'God' and 'Atheism'. The common understanding according to Theodicy and religious perspectives is that God is the uncreated creator of all that is. Further, Aristotelian and Thomistic Ontology point out to the fact that God is Pure Substance, Pure act (*Purus actus*), Being itself, the simplest yet the most necessary entity. The Atheist on his part is a person who lacks the belief in the existence of God. This lack of belief is expressed in and justified by multiple arguments propounded by different Atheists across the world. This article considers God as being with supreme attributes of Omni Potency, Omniscience and Omni-benevolence (*a Tri-Omni Entity*)

### III. REDUCTIVE SURVEY OF SELECTED ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOD'S EXISTENCE

#### 3.1. Argument from existence of evil

##### 3.1.1. Argument

The Atheist argues that the existence of evil contradicts the existence of (an Omni-benevolent) God and thus proving his non-existence. If God so loves, why does he allow evil to happen to the objects of his love? Why would an innocent person suffer and endure pain yet there is a God who can annihilate pain and suffering? Why for instance would cosmic activities like earthquakes engulf a whole village including the new-borns *who do not deserve any punishment*? These questions lead to the following inferences:

P. That God allows us to suffer

P1. Because he is not willing to save us from Pain or

P2. Because He is unable to protect us from Pain or

P3. Because He is not aware that we are suffering

.....

P1a: If God is not willing to save us from Pain and evil unconditionally then he is not *All Loving (not Omnibenevolent)*

P2a: If he is unable to protect us from evil then he is not *All powerful(not omnipotent)*

P3a: If God is not aware whether we are suffering or that evil exists then he is not *All knowing (not omniscient)*.

Conclusion: If God is not all loving(P1a), not all powerful(P2a) and not all knowing(P3a) then there does not exist a Tri-Omni Being, so called God. The persistence of evil is real and it is the persistence of disbelief in God.

##### 3.1.2. Rebuttal of the Argument

It is possible to rebut this argument in the following manner:

Q: God is intrinsically all loving, all powerful and all knowing. These attributes are not just given to God, but they

are also who he is. God is Love itself , Power itself and Knowledge itself.

Q1: It is not in God's nature to will evil towards his objects of Love because he wills to his creatures what he wills to himself. If he wills evils to his creatures then by commutation he wills evil to himself. If he wills evil to himself, then he annihilates his nature, and by doing so, he annihilates his self, or could have annihilated himself a long time ago. However, if the creator annihilates or annihilated himself, then creatures would have ceased to be because they intrinsically *are what they are because of* the creator who is also the sustainer. By appealing to Cause-Effect, if there is at-least one creature(effect) then there must exist the Creator (uncaused cause ). Creatures exist or at least I who am at this moment sitting in front of a computer typing this article *is existent*; therefore God is.

---

Conclusions: From this, we can infer two things: One, that it is impossible for God to be partially loving or hating. Two, the meaning of evil is other than what we commonly know. The first inference is self-evident in the argument herein. The second is considered in part R.

#### Q2. God cannot control evil

Having noted that God is all powerful, it cannot be the case that he can cause some things and not other things. This problem of causation is generally extrapolated by the atheist to include sin. The atheist argues that 'If God is all powerful and he can do everything he is also able to do/commit something (called) sin.

However, the Atheist errs because there are two kinds of things: Substantial things and 'accidental things'. It is God's nature to cause substantial things because he is a pure substance. Accidental things like deprivations are not things in the real sense of things. Sin is a deprivation, and so it is *not a thing* in itself but an appendage of an absence proper to all contingent beings. So to say God sins is to say 'God does non-thing' which is a statement of absurdity. It is a meaningless statement, and it is clarified in part R below

#### Q3. God is unaware of Evil's existence

Could it be possible that God is not aware that evil exists? Alternatively, he does not understand what evil is? If this is the case, then God is not *all knowing* for how could he know that evil and pain exists and fail to stop it?

This dilemma could be solved by exploring God's epistemology. Is it possible that the way God knows is entirely different from the way humans know? Moreover, given humans are not God, is it possible that humans have limited knowledge? If yes, then, it requires that humans wait until the day they will know more than God, to assess whether or not God knows what evil is. It is an ontologically impossible position to assert that God does not know, not unless we know more than God; But if we come to know

more than God, then we become God: The probability of humans becoming God is not different from its impossibility.

#### 3.1.3. Anatomy of Evil (R)

The critical solution, resolution or dissolution to the 'Appeal to Evil' as an argument against God's existence squarely lies in the concept of evil, not God. First, Evil inference is conceived as an undesirable condition. It is condition and not a being in the strictest sense. However, what is this undesirable condition? It is the condition of deprivation. Analogically speaking, when something is deprived of what is usually part of its nature, then that thing can be said to be suffering 'evil'. For instance, when a person X has an accident and has one of his legs amputated, the absence of the other leg is a deprivation. When tectonic plates develop a situation of imbalance and when it adjusts to cause an earthquake the imbalance is a deprivation, but the earthquake is a normalization process, the adjustment returns to the desired state. Although the earthquake can lead to the death of innocent humans, it is not evil. The real evil is when the earth refuses to adjust its tectonic plates. Death itself is the absence of life, not an evil. It is painful to lose a beloved one, but who said a beloved one should not die? So, philosophically speaking 'evil' is not a thing, it is not a substance, rather it is an accident, a deprivation, a 'lack of'. These deprivations occur because creatures are not God and as such are not made perfect. If God were to make perfect humans, then humans would be God yet it is philosophically and logically absurd to have several Gods.

There are two types of 'evils' : Cosmological 'evil' and Moral 'evil'. Cosmological evil is not evil because it is a simple adjustment of the cosmos while moral evil which must result from free will decision is, in this case, a *possible actual* sense an evil. In this case, evil is possible reality but again bearing in mind that humans are not perfect, even sin may not necessarily be called evil. Evil as such is existent as a deprivation and not as an entity. Therefore the Omni benevolence of God is not tainted, neither are his Omnipotence and Omniscience. Let us assume God did not create creatures, would deprivations exist? If there were no humans talk about 'evil', would there be evil? Alternatively, If God did not exist, then there would be no humans, including atheists. No humans no talk of evil, then no evil. However, evil as deprivation exists because God created talking and thinking creatures, full of imagination to talk about 'evil'. So, evil is a linguistic problem.

#### 3.2. Appeal to the apparent Biblical contradictions

##### 3.2.1. Argument

The bible is perhaps one of the most published books. It has also been a book replete with controversies. The Atheist having read the Bible observes that the Bible has many contradictions, not fit for an intelligent and *All-knowing author*. If the bible is the word of God how come it can afford errors and contradictions? Could it be that God did not author

the bible? Could the bible be a simple literature book written by unlearned men and women?

An affirmative Answer to these questions would mean that there is no God ---if by God we mean an all-knowing, literate and intelligent being.

### 3.2.2. *Rebuttal*

Argument 3.2.1. Is based on the following misconceptions:

B1: Misconception of 'Contradiction'

B2: Faulty assumption that the bible is a 'book of Logic'

B3: Failure to recognize that the bible is a library

B4: Fusion of Divine and the Human

#### *B1: Contradiction*

When the Atheist argues that the bible has contradictions he/she presents several biblical quotations as evidence for their claims without explaining what they mean by contradictions.

A contradiction is a compound proposition containing two mutually exclusive atomic propositions, commonly symbolised in formal logic as  $P \wedge \neg P$  or  $P \cdot \neg P$ , and read as P and Not P. A contradictory Proposition, therefore, holds that 'a thing can at the same time *be* and *not be*'. It is the corruption of the Law of Non-Contradiction which states that 'a thing *cannot* at the same time *be* and *not be*'. We can, therefore, deduce that for a contradiction to be truly a contradiction, two opposing propositions must be enunciated by the same person in the same manner, but most importantly at the same time. If for instance a person X states 'God exists' to contradict this statement the person X must state at the same time, in the same manner, context, categorically and intentionally that 'God does not exist'. So, the easiest way is to state "God exists and God does not exist". Several biblical quotations are typically cited by the atheist to prove contradictions. Let us consider two examples from the Bible:

S1: And it was *the third hour*, and they crucified him. —*Mark 15:25*

S2: ...about *the sixth hour*...they cried out...crucify him. They delivered him therefore unto them to be crucified. —*John 19:14-16*

**Third and Sixth:** The critical points in S1 and S2 is the time Jesus was Crucified, S1 talks of the third hour which is not a mutual exclusion of S2's Sixth hour. 'Third' is neither the negation nor the antonym of sixth; neither is 'sixth' negation of 'third'. Perhaps we could negate 'Third' by using 'not third'. However, 'not third' can also mean fourth, seventh twenty-fourth and not necessarily sixth. In this case, S1 and S2 cannot qualify to be contradictions. Where does 'sixth' and 'third' come from, in this context? Possibly there two systems of timing in use; for there were such things as Jewish timing and Roman timing. Some commentaries indicate that John was using Roman timing while Mark used Jewish timing.

**Authors:** The reporters of these two accounts are **different** (For John is not Mark and vice versa). Their reports of Jesus crucifixion are happening at different **times**; Mark having been written a few years before John's account. The fact that we are dealing with two authors, two books, written at different times, we cannot be dealing with contradictions but differences.

#### *B2: Faulty assumption that the bible is a 'book of Logic'*

Further, assuming there were apparent or real contradictions in the bible, one has to note that the bible is not a textbook of logic. Even in logic textbooks, one can find some contradictions. The main purpose of the bible is not to present logical arguments but to communicate the existential arguments and the work of God as perceived partially by the people of Israel and partially by the entire race of humans. The language and style of the Bible is free, not limited to some logical formulae. It is ultimately meant for *salvific* consumption, and not for the training of logic. Besides, Readers of the Bible are not necessarily lecturers of apologetics but consumers of what should improve their spiritual and existential *angst*. If the bible helps someone to live a morally upright and happy life why would he be concerned with splitting hairs? (Refer to Ockham 's razor and Pragmatism). In some cases, the Atheist assumes contradictions without bearing in mind the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and even Latin).

#### *B3: Failure to recognise that the bible is a library*

As already alluded in B1 above the bible is library consisting of Sixty six(66) to seventy-three (73 books in the Deuterocanonical version). These books have multiple authors, addressing different audiences at different times. So to insinuate that a verse in Genesis contradicts a verse in Matthew may not be a brilliant position. In a regular library, a reader can expect to find books dealing with Medicine, others are Philosophical yet others could be literature books yet we cannot say a book dealing with human anatomy is contradicting Past participle (*Participe passé*) tense construction in French. The two books would be different not contradicting. So is the case with the bible.

#### *B4: Fusion of Divine and the Human*

Christians would normally say 'the bible is the word of God' and 'it was inspired by God', and the atheist would pick up and argue " If God is eternal and all-knowing then he is the sole author of contradictions, for to him 1, 000 years is like a day, so then God wrote the Bible in God's one day". The answer to this is that God is the inspirer of the bible who, in his love and respect for human freedom used human language and means to communicate to humans. Due to the limited nature of human intellect the loving God chose to communicate in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic. He did not use heavenly language because his audience was not heavenly beings. Human language is limited, and the authors themselves were limited. Being limited they could not avoid

infusing humanity and human attitudes, cultural attitude into Gods word. In other words, what is important in the bible is the message, not the linguistic and cultural conundra.

3.2.2. *Conclusion: God is not a God of contradictions, and He exists*

P 1: If God is a God of Contradiction then he does **not** exist

P2: God is **not** a God of contradictions (Evidenced in B1, B2, B3 and B4)

---

Conclusion: God exists

3.3. *Christians are Immoral; therefore God does not exist*

3.3.1. *Argument*

The Atheist argues:

P1: If God cannot regulate the behaviour of Believers then he does not exist

P2: God cannot regulate the behaviour of Christians(as evidenced in the daily immoralities among Christians."

---

Conclusion: God does not exist

3.3.2. *Rebuttal:* The existence of God does not depend on how moral or immoral believers are, because he does not receive his essence from external forces. The nature of God is not

identical with the morality of humans. God is his substance and existence. The immorality of the Christian depends on the free choice God gives to human beings. Out of respect, God does not force himself onto human's free will. Decision making is part of the intelligence gem God put into human beings. Further, humans were not intended to be 'moral robots'. Through the commandments, God lays bare his plans, his guidelines and consequences for sin but leaves humans to choose on their own. Immorality among Christians is evidence that God exists, the God who creates free-willed beings.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Having observed both the arguments against God's existence and the subsequent rebuttals, it is reasonable to conclude that God exists and that Atheists do not exist in the real sense. To be an Atheist is therefore to **deny** the existence of God and to **deny** the belief that God exists. The Atheist may define Atheism as 'lack of belief in God', but Philosophy asks the causal question: "What causes this lack of belief. ...."? Is it not **Denial** as has been observed already? Psychology teaches us that Denial and rationalization are part of defense mechanism, and with this Psychological premise, would it be implausible to infer that Atheism is a Psychological disposition rather than a religious or a Philosophical one?