

DOES GOD EXIST? – THE BIG QUESTION

This age-old question has been debated for thousands of years and there is no end in sight. By the close of the nineteenth century, science seemed to have proved God's non-existence by providing vast quantities of evidence against supernatural and/or theological explanations of the physical world. "Reason" laughed at "Faith" and boasted about certainty arising from mathematics and physical observations. But the table was turned in the twentieth century when both mathematics and physics lost their auras of certainty. Kurt Gödel proved through his Incompleteness Theorem that a sufficiently rich axiom system is guaranteed to possess statements that cannot be proved or disproved within the system. Quantum mechanics took away the certainty in human knowledge of the physical world through Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which states that the more precisely we know about the position, x , of a particle, the less precisely we can know about the momentum, m , of that particle. On top of these developments, the scientific discovery that the universe began 13.75 billion years ago (The Big Bang Theory) revived the idea of a creator God. Amidst all these shifts in human thinking, hundreds, if not thousands, of books have been written on the existence and non-existence of God, and hundreds of thousands of postings have been made on the Internet and Facebook attempting to prove or disprove God's existence.

Hans Küng, a Swiss professor of ecumenical theology, Catholic priest, and prolific author, ended his 838-page tome entitled *Does God Exist?* in this manner, after a comprehensive and brilliant analysis of almost all prevailing theories of faith and doubt:

"Does God exist? Despite all upheavals and doubts, even for man today, the only appropriate answer must be that with which believers of all generations from ancient times have again and again professed their faith. It begins with the faith – *Te Deum, laudamus*, "You, God, we praise" – and ends in trust: *In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum!* "In you, Lord, I have hoped, I shall never be put to shame."

In February 2012, Professor Richard Dawkins, the world's most famous atheist, stunned the audience during a public dialogue at Oxford University with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, when Dawkins admitted that he was not sure that God doesn't exist. Professor Dawkins said: "On a scale of seven, where one means I know he exists, and seven I know he doesn't, I call myself a six." Then he modified his score to 6.9, stating: "That doesn't mean I'm absolutely confident, that I absolutely know, because I don't."

SERIOUS PROOFS AND DISPROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Philosopher Immanuel Kant stated: "It always remains a scandal of philosophy and universal human reason that the existence of things outside us ... should have to be assumed merely on faith, and that if it occurs to anyone to doubt it, we should be unable to answer him with a satisfactory proof."

Yet many proofs, both satisfactory and unsatisfactory, have been presented through the centuries. A sample of proofs for and against God's existence is provided next.

**PROOFS FOR THE
EXISTENCE OF GOD**

Ontological Argument: This argument was first proposed by St. Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century. He wrote: "God is that than which no greater can be conceived. If God is that than which no greater can be conceived then there is nothing greater than God that can be imagined. If God does not exist then there is something greater than God that can be imagined. Therefore, God exists."

Cosmological Argument: This argument was first articulated by Islamic philosophers in the tenth and eleventh centuries, based on the works of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. It is also called the Kalam Cosmological Argument. Imam Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) wrote: "Every being which begins has a cause for its beginning; now the world is a being which begins; therefore, it possesses a cause for its beginning." Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) adapted this argument as one of the five ways of proving the existence of God. In *Summa Theologica*, he wrote: "There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God."

**PROOFS AGAINST THE
EXISTENCE OF GOD**

Argument from Evil: This argument was first put forward by the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus. An all-knowing, all-powerful, and good God cannot remain silent in the face of so much evil, often pointless, in the world. Since evil exists, and God doesn't intervene, then he must not be good or all-powerful. Therefore, God does not exist. Theologians have proposed three primary defenses against this argument: (1) the Unknown Purpose Defense: God's ways are beyond human comprehension; (2) the Free Will Defense: God needs to allow some evil to preserve human free will; and (3) the Character Building Defense: God allows some evil and attendant suffering to make humans stronger.

Argument from Spontaneity: World-famous physicist Stephen Hawking wrote in his 2010 best-selling book *The Grand Design*: "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going." Renowned astronomer and scientist Carl Sagan wrote in his classic *Cosmos*: "If we say that God has always been, why not save a step and conclude that the universe has always been?"

Argument from Simplicity: To explain the complex phenomenon of the universe, it is not correct to introduce an even more complex, multi-faceted, and invisible entity, namely God. The physical universe is no different if we assume God does not exist; therefore, it is simpler to assume He does not exist.

FLIPPANT PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD	FLIPPANT PROOFS AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
<p>Argument from Fallibility: Human reasoning is inherently flawed. Therefore, there is no reasonable way to challenge a proposition. I propose that God exists. Therefore, God exists.</p>	<p>Argument from Fallibility: Human reasoning is inherently flawed. Therefore, there is no reasonable way to challenge a proposition. I propose that God doesn't exist. Therefore, God doesn't exist.</p>
<p>Argument from Quantum Physics: Quantum physics uses an uncertainty principle. There is room for God. Therefore, God exists.</p>	<p>Argument from Quantum Physics: Quantum physics uses an uncertainty principle. But, there is no room for God in science. Therefore, God doesn't exist.</p>
<p>Argument from Einstein: Einstein said that God does not play dice with the universe. Thus, even Einstein believed in God. Therefore, God exists.</p>	<p>Argument from Steadfast Atheism: A lot of really cool people didn't believe in God their entire lives. Therefore, God doesn't exist.</p>
<p>Pascal's argument: If God exists, it would be really cool. (And I would win big-time). If God didn't exist, it would really suck. (But I wouldn't lose much). Thus I should believe in God because it's the best bet. Therefore, God exists.</p>	<p>Anti-Pascal's Argument: If God exists, it would really suck. If God didn't exist, it would be really cool. Therefore, God doesn't exist.</p>



“God said it, I believe it. That settles it”

— AMERICAN BUMPER STICKER