

What is God? Does God Exist?

Throughout this article I will refer to God as 'it' rather than he or she for we have no evidence with which to ascribe a gender to God.

The two questions 'What is God' and 'Does God exist' are older than we can say. Yet we still fail to find any adequate answers that all can believe. So are the questions worth asking?

The preceding article professed to be agnostic. An agnostic person is someone who believes it is impossible to know whether God exists. The term was first used in 1869 by Thomas Henry Huxley. Robert Ingersoll and Bertrand Russell are two other examples of famous agnostics, both of whom were nineteenth or twentieth century westerners. It is these facts, together with the rising popularity of agnosticism and atheism that have persuaded many people to describe the modern western nations as radically new in their religious thinking. Yet agnostic ideas date back to the origin of religious ones. Even now there are scholars within every monotheistic religion (a religion that believes in one God) who agnostically believe that the true nature of God will not and cannot ever be discovered.

Christian philosopher Blaise Pascal offered a very selfish reason to believe: that the infinite expected value of acknowledging God is always greater than the finite expected value of not acknowledging his existence, and thus it is a safer "bet" to choose God. I seriously doubt that with such beliefs Pascal did not doubt the existence of God. But he thought about things logically and decided to believe the course with the most benefits.

So is agnosticism the logical thing to believe? Is it the belief of a doubting philosopher who takes all present knowledge into account? No. It is not. Agnosticism can be seen in every academic or working community. We cannot find the answer to a certain question and therefore think because we have searched for so long, that it must not exist. The same thing was said before the first man made flight. So a doubtful philosopher would in fact be agnostic about agnosticism and keep searching for the truth, because it just might be out there!

The previous article suggests that God could be the symmetry of nature, and also a power lying behind all consistent laws in the universe. It states that science can see this God but not explain it. This seems a little ambiguous. What is it that science is seeing? What indeed are the 'consistent' laws of the universe that God lies behind?

To understand what it is that science is seeing I sought to understand the common properties of God that the majority believe in. I immediately hit the heart of the problem in this debate. There is almost no consensus over what God is. Even the dictionary admits defeat. It says God is "the sole Supreme Being, Creator and ruler of all" but then says this is only the case "in religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam." Another definition exists under 'god' without a capital: "a supernatural being, worshipped as the controller of the universe or some aspect of life or as the personification of some force". The first definition only applies to the religions of the book. The second is hugely ambiguous, and even then still misses out many mainstream believers. Some who define themselves as Buddhists, Hindus or another of the mainstream religions would also describe themselves as atheists. Shintoism, the traditional religion of Japan, teaches that everything contains a 'kami', which is often translated as a spirit or even God.

So do people agree on anything? Most people agree that there is something that could be termed Godly. People also tend to agree that God is powerful relative to humans. The rest is open to debate. There are many who claim to offer scientific evidence to either prove or disprove God's existence. I recently read an article that concluded God must have created us because life contains genetic coding and we currently have no proof of coding appearing naturally. This is the ancient argument. It is equivalent to a child shouting that as he has not seen an ornament being carved, it must have been created by God. Indeed many beliefs do not even agree with creationism. Buddhism for example commonly argues that there are no permanent Gods. It teaches that Gods and humans alike are in a permanent state of Samsara i.e. a perpetual cycle of birth, life and death, and that the only escape is through enlightenment. I do wonder if this means the Dalai Lama has never been enlightened in previous life cycles. But nevertheless the only apparent way of arguing the existence of God seems to me to be through logic. I will first list a number of Godly features, qualities and actions. I shall then argue whether they seem likely.

Existence

The existence of God naturally depends on the existence of something, anything. How do we know we exist? Descartes says because we think. Because you are thinking about your existence you know something is happening. You therefore know something exists. But on what level do we exist? If our thoughts prove our existence what can God's thoughts do?

If God's knowledge and power is infinite couldn't the very thoughts of God have independent thoughts and feelings themselves? We can see, taste, touch and experience things around us but we know that our brains can very easily be tricked, even by other humans, let alone the mind of God. This theory could possibly account for the non-existence of scientific and mathematical laws for God. They could exist only as concepts in God's mind and therefore have no basis in God's reality. Indeed it would even be possible for God to lead a life similar to a human one. In this theory God could be a geeky child sat daydreaming in class. God could indeed be a finite being. For as we know time is relative. If from one second to the next everything started to move faster i.e. you worked faster, the earth spun faster, you moved and ate faster, how would you know everything really was faster? The answer is that you wouldn't. You would look at your clock, see that five minutes had passed and believe it. Therefore God could be imagining the entirety of our existence at an accelerated rate relative to that that he experiences simply to fit it all into a particularly boring class at school.

The implications of this theory are that you and I don't really exist. We are mere thoughts flickering across the mind of an alien being that due to some knowledge about the existence of something greater, we have chosen to call God. The downfall of this theory is that it indicates that God is a life form. A life form is very complicated, particularly one that can think on such a level. How did that life form come to exist? Saying that it always existed and always will exist is not an answer for although it is possible it doesn't account for God's complexities.

Hence if this theory is wrong it seems we really do exist in reality and therefore so might God.

Emotions such as love and anger

Although the word "emotion" does not appear in the Bible, the word "anger" is mentioned 270 times. The word "joy" is mentioned 242 times; "grief" 35 times, "terror" 88 times, "mourning" 47

times, and "mourn" 138 times. The Bible discusses multiple emotions as part of the human experience. But shockingly, the Bible also mentions them as part of God's experience. See Exodus 4:14, Leviticus 26:28, and Numbers 11:33 for a few examples. The Bible frequently describes God as "slow to anger" (Psalm 103:8).

The problem with this is that human emotions are finite. All human behaviour exists within a finite experience and a relatively small range. The Bible says, humans are created in God's image: "God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:26-27. If this is true then an infinite God has finite emotions. That would make God emotionally immature for one with so much power. Could God have infinite emotions? Emotions are in part defined by their finiteness and intensity. Hence God does not experience what we term as emotions.

Power

Power is one of the few things that people agree God possesses. But how do we define power? According to the dictionary it is simply the ability to do something. It is commonly believed that humans are the most powerful species on the planet. Yet humans cannot evolve as fast as bacteria and are nowhere near as numerous. If the world was destroyed it would be bacteria that may possibly survive, not humans. In *The Origin of Life* Paul Davies explains how it is possible for bacterial spores to survive for millions of years in space, with "an infinitesimal chance that one day the spore will reach a planet with liquid water. Then suddenly, after a thousand millennia of undisturbed torpor, the spore will return from the dead. Its bacterial soul will begin to stir, genetic memory banks will warm up, metabolism will restart."¹ In fact there are thousands of examples of human inferiority to other species that could be listed.

Some Buddhists argue the case that there are Gods but in fact they are not all powerful and on some levels it is preferable to be human. The flaw with this theory is that it goes against the one asset of God that most people tend to agree on: power. If you take a certain amount of power away from a God it is no longer a God, merely a part of existence more akin to what most people would describe as an alien. Something that has limits on its power can fail and can be defeated. Its existence may therefore be finite, or may simply have no relevance to us. Imagine the strongest star. That star is nowhere near us. It has a huge amount of power but is not near enough to do anything that will really affect us. Its power is limited and it is not therefore a God.

According to some God's power is infinite in all areas i.e. time, power, space, etc and God's power is hence indisputably larger than that of all other things. Yet this is easy to argue against. Could God make a stone so heavy God itself couldn't lift it? No. Could God therefore be all-powerful relative to other things and beings i.e. things outside of itself? This would mean that if God is the Creator then God simply created things less powerful than itself. After all if only God existed then how would God be powerful? This would mean the creator God was not powerful prior to creation. But what about after creation? An all-powerful God would go against everything we know and have experienced. It would mean something that cannot be defeated, held to account or challenged. In fact although it

¹ Davies, Paul; *The Origin of Life*; Penguin Books; 1999; p204;

has not been proven as a scientific law there seems to be a law that everything is balanced by and/or dependent on something else at least in part. Life is dependent on gases, sources of energy and/or water. Matter can be changed by other things. Although we don't really know what they are, we know that even forces rely on things to be forced. Imagine trying to pull something when there was nothing to pull. You simply couldn't exercise this force. You would still have the potential to use the force, but the force itself would not exist. So either this proposition/theory is wrong, or God is not all-powerful, or perhaps God is outside and beyond this law of balance. Let us propose that God is outside of this law and it was actually God who decided that most things should balance or depend on other things.

Creationism

Classical Physics will tell you that something cannot come from nothing. So God could only have created reality from or within itself. More modern physicists, especially Quantum Physicists will tell you that something can be created from nothing. Some people will tell you that they are only thinking something can be pulled from another place, or that 'nothing' doesn't really exist. But there are two ways of actually creating something from nothing.

One is that God could have created, and therefore acted outside, the laws of science and mathematics. Some scientists have theorised that the closer you are to a Singularity (a situation like the one that created our universe where all matter and energy is condensed to such a degree that there is an almost infinite amount of mass and energy in a location so small it has zero dimensions) the more the laws of science bend. It could be that this was the point where God created all things, including the laws of science. If this is true then God created everything that we learn about, analyse and use to compare. It raises an interesting question. Does God still intervene in our existence, acting outside the laws of science to do so? Would it even be possible for God to affect us without us affecting God? Perhaps Singularities are the only points at which God bends these laws? However you look at it, it remains that these laws cannot therefore be used to analyse God successfully.

The other way is that God acted within a law that stated everything must balance, and therefore created minus one in order to create plus one. Recent discoveries of anti-matter would back the theory that this is possible, and of course mathematics would agree.

So Creationism is possible. But if so the problem of causation appears. It is perhaps necessary to say here that time could not be a finite line. If so nothing would exist prior to the beginning, hence existence would have no cause and be made from nothing. Neither would anything exist after the end, hence things would simply magically disappear. Something can become zero but zero is not nothing for it separates into plus and minus. A time loop is possible but difficult to believe the implications of such a theory. It would mean a finite amount of time repeating itself. The same beginning and end would be fated to happen for infinity, and meanwhile this loop would have had no cause for it would never have begun. Hence something must always have existed. Therefore God must have existed eternally if God created everything else.

Following this theory of creation would mean either God is made of multiple parts that combined to cause creation or the cause was more psychological and there was an actual meaning/purpose in creation. The cause cannot have been intentionally physical as this form of all-powerful God has no need. It cannot have been emotional as an infinite God could not have finite emotions, never mind

the peculiarity of an infinitely complex God, existing without production or causation, creating other things.

Hence either God was an un-human like group of things that coincidentally used its infinite power to create everything else, or God was not a creator. Yet even this is unlikely. If God was a group of different things, like parts of the body or chemicals and forces, then after creation had occurred these parts would begin to change just as everything else does. Being separate and only loosely grouped they would be incorporated into the laws that God created. They could not remain completely separate in a situation where neither God nor the rest of existence ever interfered with one another. The parts that made up God would become part of the cycle of cause and effect. If God were a life form it would become dependent on other things within creation for energy. If it was a group of chemicals and forces then the way in which they are grouped would be so different today that we could not any longer describe God as existing. Based on these arguments it is incredibly unlikely that an infinitely powerful God created all things.

A symmetry of existence

If God was symmetrical of existence it would echo the nature of matter, space, energy, time, forces and also life. This God would be infinitely complex. Finite emotions could form a part of this God, and yet it could still possess an infinite combination of emotions. It would be impossible to conclude that God and the rest of existence never mixed or impacted upon one another. Hence in all likeliness, God changes. But with this view God could be partially temporary and changing, yet still remain permanent in existence and definable as one thing. The difficulty with this belief comes with creationism. If God lies behind all consistent laws in the universe as the previous article suggests, did God create them?

Perhaps God is merely a part of existence that happens to be more powerful than other things, and reflect everything else. Perhaps it balances existence by forging everything else into an accurate symmetry of itself? This God could act within the laws of science and mathematics by creating a negative at the same time as a positive. This would mean God has always existed alongside everything else and only shapes and changes forms just as we do when we divide one piece of wood into multiple parts by carving it into a shape. However it is an idea that is both feasible and reflective of ideas common throughout science and all the major religions.

Conclusion

History tells us religion has and always will continue to evolve. But the next believable step to scientists seems to be that God is not a personified being, but instead reality itself, or at least a part of reality. Some people may argue that God was the Singularity that resulted in the Big Bang and this entire universe. Others could argue that God is a dominant force with a large causal role in existence, perhaps existing as our symmetry or our opposite, the Yin to our Yang. Some will argue that life is God. Others that all forces are in fact the separate sides of one force, and that Astronomers will eventually discover the Grand Unified Theory really leads to God.

There are many possible ideas about whether God exists. It is undeniable that the answer to this question hinges upon how God is defined. Perhaps with the evolution of languages and religion the words God, religion and spirituality may evolve to become quite different. They may become all that

is good, or perhaps something more subjective. Psychologists say they have discovered an emotion that they call 'divinity'. This is an emotion I am sure you are aware of. It is what you feel when you feel connected to everything around you, when you feel at peace and accepting, even happy that everything is as it is. This description also seems remarkably like how people describe enlightenment. The spiritual aspects of God in particular may become linked to this emotion and simply describe subjective things that trigger that emotion in us.

Scientists have now discovered how many people have felt such feelings of great power. There are two parts at the back of the human brain that help to define our boundaries and sense of self. These can stop working when we fast, are very dehydrated or on drugs. When the brain tries to define its boundaries it can keep reaching out and not find anything. This results in a feeling of being in the presence of something far beyond ourselves.

But are these arguments atheist? No. Divinity can be found in many things. If all that we can agree on is that God is a power then I can safely say that power exists everywhere. And whether or not you believe in God as it appears in the religions of the book, religion will always play a role in our lives. Yet even if there is a higher power this is not what religion is about. If a higher moral power existed it would not want you to waste your time worshipping. Instead it would ask that you spend that time helping others to minimise their negative emotions and maximise their positive ones. If this God only sought balance it would ask you to seek enlightenment and therefore happiness in an indirect manner.

Is existence devoid of meaning? Absolutely not. Firstly, even if we are able to prove exactly how things happen this would not mean religion does not exist. Who said anything about magic? Either A) God does not exist or B) God acts within the laws of science or C) God created the laws of science and is powerful enough to change them. Any way you look at it there is always cause and effect. It would always be possible to prove how anything happened scientifically, even if we discover different laws of science prior to the Big Bang and/or outside of this universe. Secondly, ask yourself why we have this emotion of divinity. Perhaps it is linked to a God in the more traditional use of the word.

To say life is devoid of meaning is simply pessimistic. Obviously it depends how you define meaning. But there is no proof, or even an argument for the case that life has no meaning. Traditionally people say that life has meaning because God gives us that meaning. This has since evolved into the meaning or purpose of life. This meaning, if it existed, would be subjective to God. We do not know God is moral. Even if so, why should we obey someone's given purpose for us just because they are powerful and moral? You would not worship a powerful King, and you would probably feel guilty if you managed to accidentally create life and then asked it to worship you and follow a specific purpose. This life form would have very little meaning for it would only have one; yours. It may be best to follow the teachings of the most powerful, moral and clever of all. But until these teachings are proven to be truly Godly it is ridiculous to think that we have only one purpose and only one meaning. What if that purpose was realised? Perhaps it already has been. What would you do if God told you that your meaning and purpose had been fulfilled? You'd feel great today of course. But tomorrow? The day after that? You would have no choice but to see the wider truth; that meaning can be found everywhere, and everyone has a responsibility to themselves to reach a subjective purpose/set of purposes to guide their own lives.

Some meanings are unintentionally met. Every time you speak to someone you affect them, altering what they do and adding meaning to their life. Other meanings are literally scattered around you. There is meaning in all of nature if you aren't too blind or perhaps learned enough to see it.

And scale? We continue to discover that we (humans and Earthlings as a totality) are a smaller part of existence than we had thought. I recently talked to a couple of friends who adamantly argued that there was no meaning apart from that which we can create ourselves. They argued that because we are such a small part of everything our meaning is irrelevant. This seems to be a cultural trait shared by our generation in the West. We say the same thing when it comes to voting or playing the lottery. We say what's one vote going to do when it's only one vote out of 60 million? In reality we are a far smaller part of everything than this fraction. Nevertheless we still exist! We still have meaning within everything. And our meaning is almost infinite too. Any one thing you do could affect an infinite number of other things. This couple that I was speaking to argued that apart from our impact on the forces e.g. gravity there was little else we could do to impact something off of the Earth. Firstly even if this was true your life could still have infinite meanings. Secondly, it is not true anyway. In 1911 a rock from the planet Mars crashed to Earth in a small town called Nakhla in Egypt and killed a dog. Matter travels from planet to planet. This is a known fact. What we do impacts upon what matter goes where, or what impact this has e.g. the dog's owner caused the dog to be in that spot, hence beginning an infinite causal chain resulting in who knows what. But this is merely one small example of the universal cycle of cause and effect. As I mentioned earlier it is possible for bacterial spores to survive in space. In fact life travelling in space is not as uncommon as you might think. Analyses of cometary dust captured in the stratosphere together with data obtained from space missions to comets have revealed the presence of a great variety of organic molecules. Indeed it is perfectly possible that there was not one tree of life but several. Imagine that when the dinosaurs were wiped out a comet brought new organic matter that evolved into present day life forms such as us. The cycle of cause and effect, integral to the Buddhist belief, is indeed true in all reality on and off of this planet.

So if God really is a part of reality today it seems logical to think that God is either all of reality, the part of reality that draws all other parts together, or a symmetrical half of existence. If this God seeks anything it seeks balance. Does this God require praise? No. Is this God easy to find and hence a great part of all of our lives? Yes, for this God truly would be everywhere.