Watch without a Watchmaker: Philosophical Questions of Non-Believing
By Greg Scott

Since the beginning of the 21st Century, atheists and agnostics within the western world have become increasingly more vocal about their distaste for religion in the public sphere. Because of this, the biggest argument in history has once again heated up and there have been many attacks against atheism. I will argue that these are inadequate and when the absurdities of the arguments for being a believer are taken into account, not being spiritual seems to be the only logical choice.

This new approach of contemporary atheism is much more evangelistic and seeks converts, while older forms were kept between intellectuals. In particular, Michel Onfray’s atheology embodies these values in a new spirited non-believing. This has caused the increasingly vocal atheism to receive much disdain and hatred in the United States from the West’s biggest religion, Christianity.

Many of the accusations against the growing atheism by the Christian community involve accusations of having no ethics. After all, without The Holy Bible dictating ethics, couldn’t people do whatever they want including genocide, misogyny, rape, and murder? There have been many value systems created that have nothing to do with the belief in an afterlife, including Confucianism and Utilitarian Hedonism. The concern could best be answered by the hedonist ethics system shown in Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism, which stressed avoiding pain, emphasized pleasure, and the greatest good for the greatest number.

This system focuses on improving the here and now, as opposed to the afterlife.

A skeptic of atheism may then further relate that Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot were atheists, so there has to be a logical connection between violence and being an atheist. However, this is an ad hominem, which is a logical fallacy where an arguer attacks a person with the intention of degrading that person’s argument. Of course not only is this a fallacy, but the same argument can be made about religion. Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini were both Roman Catholics, so this logical fallacy could be used to ignorantly argue against Christianity.

Perhaps the most important pragmatic concern cited to atheists is “What if you are wrong?” In other words, why won’t non-believers accept Pascal’s Wager and give themselves damnation insurance? To understand this fallacy, one must first assume the scenario of someone who does not believe but follows Christianity anyway. Upon dying, this person arrives in front of God and is very relieved that he followed Christianity out of fear of burning in hell. Since God is by definition omnipotent, then he would know without a doubt that Jesus was never accepted by the person in their heart. This, by the laws in Christianity would make the person no better off than if he never followed Christianity out of fear and would burn in Hell anyway. Pascal’s wager could only work on the assumption that a person could fool an all knowing deity.

While these arguments attack the ethics and practicality of

---


2 Onfray, 58.
being an atheist, many believers have argued that the burden of evidence must be met for them not to consider atheism wrong. However, as Bertrand Russell stated in his essay *Is There a God?*, the burden of evidence is on the believer. This is known as “Russell’s Teapot”. His argument is that someone could assert a very small teapot elliptically orbits between Mars and Earth and is too small to be viewed with a telescope. While this could not be disproved, anyone listening would reason this is absurd. However, if this teapot idea was stated in a holy book or taught in churches, the skeptics would be scathèd for not believing in it.

Unlike the teapot, many arguments in favor of believing have been made by theists. One of the most famous is the teleological argument. This very old argument essentially states that the universe is too complex to have just happened; therefore it must have been designed by a sentient and ultra intelligent being. The obvious counter example is by this same logic, God, the most complex thing in existence, must have been created also by an even greater being, which leads to an infinite chain of super-creators. A popular analogy for this argument is the watchmaker analogy, which states: You come across a watch in the woods and have never seen a watch before. You would understand that the watch is too complex to have occurred naturally; therefore it was created by someone or something that could be called the watchmaker.

In light of evolution, which is a far simpler answer than explaining God as a phenomenon that sits outside of time and space, this analogy has been dropped by biology. While the Intelligent Design response could be that God caused evolution, when factoring in Ockham’s Razor (the simplest answer that takes everything into account is always the best), it is much less complicated not to have God in the equation.

The other argument for the existence of God is the cosmological argument. This argument hinges on universal causation. The cosmological argument states that everything that begins (is finite and) has a cause; the universe began, so it has a cause. One of the many counter-points is that the human mind likes to conceive that there are causes to everything, when in fact, we know that if God is real, then God has no cause. If God is not real, then the universe was not intelligently caused. By applying Ockham’s Razor, it is much simpler for the universe not to be the product of an intelligent cause than to explain the mechanics of a Deity that is infinitely more complex than those attributed to the physical universe.

---