

Atheism is the belief that there is no God, with science being the only substantial source of evidence to support it. Theism is the belief in a God, without scientific evidence, but with human reason, the study of human conscience, personal experience and truth claims. To state 'Atheism is implausible' is to reject the idea that there is nothing more than Science or Naturalism, but that we have something greater and far more exciting (one could argue) beyond what is known materialistically to us. With the rise in modern anthropological studies, science alone is simply not enough to significantly challenge the theistic worldview; we now have a greater understanding of emotions, as one example, which go beyond any explanation that science could possibly give. The implausibility of Atheism should only be argued if the contrarian has an alternative to offer all readers, which is what I will be providing in this essay. I will be exploring three main topics that are constantly debated within society: The Teleological argument for the existence of God, the Problem of Evil, and whether humans possess a soul.

'The God Delusion', written by Richard Dawkins, is an academically robust book compiled of arguments attempting to establish that we live in a 'God – free' universe. Alister McGrath's book 'The Dawkins Delusion' holds persuasive pages exploring the statement that science has not disproved God, contrary to the claims of scientists whose views align with Dawkins'.

In Chapter 4 of 'The God Delusion', he proposes, as one of his many arguments in this chapter, the critique of irreducible

complexity. He attempts to argue that Theists enjoy exaggerating the intricate structure of biological organisms to give off the impression that evolution would not be a sufficient explanation for how they came to be. Additionally, Dawkins proceeds to dismantle the book 'Life – How did it Get Here?', written by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, by stressing that natural selection is the only valid solution to combat the idea of an intelligent designer. It is right to give him credit for his use of scientific probability, but he, along with many atheists, fail to recognise the misuse of science in ideology, which McGrath identifies in chapter 2 of his book, with his accusation being that scientific theories can be distorted to serve atheistic worldviews. One only has to look at Dawkins' remarkable ability to add ideological interpretations to the Darwinian Evolution theory (for example, that science has disproved God) which goes far beyond any evidence that science has been able to provide. Furthermore, William Paley, a famous Christian apologist, came up with the analogy of the Watchmaker, where a person stumbles upon a watch laying on top of a heath; they look more closely at its complex and intricate nature and conclude that it must have been designed, without having knowledge of a designer. When one thinks about this on a deeper level, it would be so incredibly unreasonable for them to deny how our universe has been so cleverly constructed, in such a way that 'chance' is far-fetched. An intelligent designer making the decision to produce complex structures is a logical argument that cannot be disproved by this theory, which

allows for it to be a more reasonable explanation compared to the generalised Atheistic opinion.

It would be wise to address the 'Problem of Evil', a highly debated topic. In Bertrand Russell's essay titled 'Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilization? (1930)' he bluntly states that "Before He created the world, He foresaw all the pain and misery that it would contain; He is therefore responsible for all of it." It would be fair to say that this brusque claim correlates to the Inconsistent Triad, argued by Hume, by which he argues 'God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions.' This idea looks logical; God created the world knowing that the beings He made in His image (*Imago Dei*) would have to endure different levels of suffering, so doesn't that make him solely responsible for all evil? In the fourth edition of his book 'Philosophy of Religion', John Hick presents readers with 2 of the most famous theodicies, written by St Augustine and St Irenaeus, where the combination of their separate approaches showed new ways of tackling this challenging question.

St Augustine's main philosophical position, Hick states, is 'the idea of the negative and privative nature of evil.' With the use of his 'blindness analogy', he holds the view that it is the corrupt nature of humanity that 'deprives aspects of God's creation of its goodness'. He strongly believes in our inherent capacity to misuse our free will which is derived from Adam and Eve at the fall of mankind (we are all 'seminally present in the loins of Adam'). Friedrich

Schleiermacher, a German Protestant Theologian, liked to point out the mystery of the 'fallen angels', as it is the criticism of how 'some of the angels fell while others remained steadfast.' Was it not possible for God to create beings that would never fall? The Irenaean Theodicy can give a convincing explanation to answer this: Evil and suffering are necessary for humanity's spiritual growth and development into God's likeness - He provided all beings with free will, therefore it is a choice on how we decide to use it. In the context of the 'fallen angels', that was a decision that God gave them the ability to make. I think it is fair to say that Atheists fail to acknowledge the difference between knowledge and responsibility, which is made apparent here, as they jump to the conclusion that God should be held accountable for allowing evil to enter the world, when it was mankind who disrupted the harmony of His creation at our own expense. This strongly indicates that the Problem of Evil is a developing issue initially caused by humanity, which does not disprove the Theist understanding of God's characteristics, regardless of Hume's 'Inconsistent Triad' argument against this.

The third and final topic I would like to challenge Atheists on is their argument against the existence of a soul. Of course, this is a big claim, but the unreasonableness of this proposition aligns with the nature of their other ideas. By definition, a soul is the spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal. Socrates famously stated that 'if the soul is immortal, it demands our care not only for that part of time which we call life, but for all

time; and indeed, it would seem now that it will be extremely dangerous to neglect it', and I could not agree more.

Yet again, the Atheistic view unsurprisingly jumps back to science, attempting to say that we are merely carriers of information and DNA with the symbolic meaning of a soul relating to one's intellectual capacity as well as their emotional intelligence. One is allowed to ask, how can you justify the idea that complex emotions, such as guilt, jealousy, grief, shame or pride are limited by biology?

Both Swinburne and Plantinga rightly believe that there must be more to us than just chemistry and biology; there are fundamental aspects of us which cannot be explained through our physical bodies, like moral obligation and moral freedom.

Furthermore, Renee Descartes, who is most known for his phrase 'Cogito Ergo Sum' (which translates to 'I think therefore I am'), was a Substance Dualist, meaning that he thought the soul/mind must be a different substance from the body. This is because we can doubt material existence but simply cannot doubt that we think. On one hand, Descartes took the Theistic approach to the topic of the soul, as far as he believed in separate entities, although, on the other hand, he held a scientific viewpoint in terms of how they interact with one another. One can see this in his radical idea that the mind and body interconnect through the pineal gland (this has since been falsified by both Theists and Atheists). However, Descartes was not alone in terms of his dualist approach to the

soul, as this philosophical tradition can be traced back to Plato, who also believed that the soul and mind were immaterial and fundamentally different from the body. In order to correctly analogise his thoughts, He wrote dialogues, such as 'The Dialogue of Phaedo', where he argues that the soul gives life to the body, therefore it must possess life in and of itself, implying that it cannot die when our physical bodies do. If one looks to burial sites from around 300,000 years ago, we can clearly see that we rebel at the idea of extinction on death as it is the belief that there is something immortal about us. This can also be further backed up by near-death experiences, in which there are many recorded. Even though there is something to say about the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence in terms of replicating feelings like consciousness, there is a level of ambiguity here, due to the unknown functions of the human brain, which scientific evidence is unable to support.

On a topic like Atheism, you must give credit to great scientists like Dawkins, who have helped increase the girth of empirical knowledge around the world, but with his inability to see beyond 'science', that knowledge of the supposed 'unknown' becomes limited. The Theistic worldview has been evidenced from sources like the Bible, where there have been no archaeological discoveries that have contradicted the Gospel accounts, for example. The teleological argument for the existence of God not only correctly dismisses the atheistic worldview but gives further reason as to why it would be irrational to think otherwise, which is what McGrath

helpfully provides us with. The theodicies of Augustine and Irenaeus tackling the 'Problem of Evil' convincingly suggest why, as humans, we endure all kinds of suffering on earth, leaving little room for complete uncertainty. Additionally, Schleiermacher attempts to argue that the 'fallen angels' that are acknowledged in Genesis, were given the capacity to fall and suggests whether that leaves God with the ultimate responsibility for their mistake. We should all agree that when presented with the opportunity for certain decisions to be made, we do, allowing for us to exercise our free will. This does not make the 'giver' accountable for the irresponsible actions that follow; that is not fair. I would like to finally address the arguments proposed for the 'soul, mind and body', which are obviously outlined by scientists and naturalists, who always seem to rigidly claim that a human possessing something beyond biology is somewhat absurd, although there would be people who would simply flip the argument the other way, saying that it would be strange to think we didn't have anything more to us. I hope that we can all come to an agreement that within this topic, it is a challenge to argue from the perspective of religious or atheistic belief due to the level of ambiguity we are so frustratingly confronted with. I find it hard to be satisfied with the atheistic suggestion that every bodily experience for mankind is only explainable through science. This whole concept does not provide evidence for: near death/out of body experiences, complex emotions, different intellectual capacities or our ability for moral decision making. We have all been

exposed to the limits of science, and now need to welcome other forms of knowledge, like Religion, to offer us clear and logical ways to discover beyond our universe's expanse. Considering the depth of human consciousness, and the constant and consistent presence of intuitive morality, Atheism cannot be considered unlikely but implausible.