

DENYING GOD, DENYING REALITY: WHY WE DON'T NEED EVIDENCE FOR GOD (PART 1 OF 3)

Rating: 5.0

Description: The existence of God does not require evidence. Part 1 discusses that belief in God is a self-evident truth and self-evident truths are cross-cultural, innate and provide the basis for a coherent worldview.


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Published on: 29 Dec 2014

Last modified on: 01 Jun 2015

Does God exist? This is the question I've constantly discussed with Atheist academics. The discussion is often put forward in different guises but the premise is always the same; does God exist and what evidence is there to support this belief? 

In fact, I would argue that we don't need any evidence for God's existence. So the question itself needs debating. It shouldn't actually be "does God exist?", but rather "what reasons do we have to reject His existence?"

Now, don't get me wrong, I believe we have many good arguments which support a belief in God. The point I am raising here, however, is that we don't require any evidence for His existence: God is an axiomatic belief. In other words, God's existence is self-evidently true. Also known as a 'basic belief' in the language of philosophy.

The idea of self-evident truths are accepted by all. Take science for example: science takes the world's reality as a self-evident truth; it believes that the world is real. In other words, the physical world is separate and external from our minds and our thoughts.

So you may be thinking, 'I believe that the real world is real, as I can touch and feel it. I believe the world is real because other people also say that the world is as tangible to them as it is to me.'

However, this doesn't prove anything. Touching and feeling something doesn't prove that what you touch and feel is external to your mind. The thinking and feeling could simply be happening by the workings of your brain. Consider this; maybe your brain is in a jar on the Moon. There is an alien who has placed probes in it, who is making you think and feel what you're feeling right now.

You don't actually have substantial evidence for the reality of the world you experience. Evidence based on experience is unreliable as the experience could simply be produced in the brain. Evidence based on philosophy or complex logic is also a product of the mind. The external world may have no real existence apart from what is going on in your skull.

On reading this you may demand proof, proof that the real world is external to the brain... but we don't have any proof. Actually, we don't need it. That's why we call the belief in the real world an axiom, a self-evident truth or a basic belief. Therefore, I would argue, that rejecting God's existence is equivalent to rejecting that the world is real because they are both self-evident truths.

This is not a type of special pleading for God because there are a myriad of other self-evident truths and axioms that we believe in. These include:

- The existence of other minds
- The existence of objective moral values
- The existence of logical truths
- The validity of our reasoning
- The law of causality

Self-evident truths, axioms and basic beliefs are cross cultural in that they are not culturally bound. They are also innate in that they are not acquired via any form of information transfer, and they are also foundational. What is meant by foundational is that they provide the basis for a coherent worldview. These aspects of self-evident truths will be explained further while addressing the key objections to this argument.

Objection #1: What about the great pumpkin, or the spaghetti monster?

There are some objections to this argument. Some atheists and sceptics will say: 'What about the great pumpkin, or the spaghetti monster?' They highlight that if God is a self-evident truth, if God is axiomatic, then why can't the spaghetti monster, or the great pumpkin be self-evident truths as well?

There are three ways of dealing with this false contention:

1. **A Cross Cultural Belief:** The 'spaghetti monster' and the 'great pumpkin' are not natural tendencies.^[1] There is not a broad natural tendency to believe in a 'spaghetti monster' or 'great pumpkin'. These are not natural tendencies, they are culturally bound. For example, if I believe in a spaghetti monster, I would have to have been brought up in a culture in which you are taught about spaghetti and monsters.

However, the idea of God, the basic underlying idea of a creator, of a supernatural cause for the universe, is cross-cultural. It is not contingent on culture but transcends it, just like the belief in causality and the existence of other minds.

2. **An Innate Belief:** Properly basic beliefs, axiomatic beliefs, and self-evident truths, do not require information transfer. For me to understand what a spaghetti monster is, I require information to be transferred to me. For example, I require knowledge of western cuisine and Italian culture. But when it comes to the idea of God's existence as the creator of the universe, you do not require any information transfer, whether from culture, or education. This is why sociologists and anthropologists argue that even if atheist children were stranded on a desert island, they would come to believe that something created the desert island.^[2]

This is very critical to understand because we frequently hear 'God is no different than believing in the spaghetti monster'. This is not true. If you understand self-evident truths, axiomatic and basic beliefs then you would see that they do not require information transfer. The basic concept of God does not require information transfer. The idea that monsters exist, or even that spaghetti exists, requires information transfer. Therefore the spaghetti monster is not a self-evident truth.

3. **A Foundational Belief:** The third point is that basic and axiomatic beliefs are foundational: they provide a basis for a coherent world view. They answer questions and facilitate knowledge. For example, God's existence, explains conscious emergence, the fact that we have consciousness within a material world.^[3] It answers the questions for which we have no answer, like the question of language. Currently, evolutionary paradigms can't explain the development of language.^[4] It also explains the existence of objective moral truths and offers a foundation for explaining why things happen.

Let's apply this to another self-evident truth: the validity of our reasoning. Trusting our minds and the very fact that we can reason to the truth is a basic belief. If we did not hold such a belief then how could we trust our minds? How could we reason to the truth? How could we understand the universe and ourselves? These questions are indicative of the foundational nature of the validity of our reasoning.

God's existence provides a foundation for a coherent world view, facilitates knowledge and answers key fundamental questions. A belief in the spaghetti monster or the belief in the great pumpkin, only provides the foundation for a few laughs.

Footnotes:

[1]

Is Belief in God Properly Basic. Alvin Plantinga. *Noûs*. Vol. 15, No. 1, 1981 A. P. A. Western Division Meetings (Mar., 1981), pp. 41-51. You can find the journal online here: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2215239>.

[2]

BBC Radio 4 Today, 24 November 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_7745000/7745514.stm. Accessed 17 December 2014.

[3]

For more on this please read "Consciousness and the New Scientist Magazine", Hamza Andreas Tzortzis, 2014. <http://www.iera.org/research/essays-articles/consciousness-and-the-new-scientist-magazine-reflections-on-false-materialist-assumptions-hamza-tzortzis>. Accessed 17 December 2014.

[4]

"This highlights an important and difficult challenge facing the study of language evolution: the need for cooperation between different disciplines and between researchers working on different aspects of the problem. Without this cooperation a satisfactory account of the evolution of human language, and therefore of human language itself, is likely to be elusive." ([Prefinal Draft] Kirby, S. (2007). The evolution of language. In Dunbar, R. and Barrett, L., editors, Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology, pp. 669–681. Oxford University Press.)

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