

Why God does not exist

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Inspired by the upcoming discussion "Does God exist?" (International Society of Krishna Consciousness at DMU), I like to clarify my view on the existence or non-existence of God. The debate is mostly dominated by religious groups, since they feel the need for that, therefore, as a way of compensating this (biased stimulus) and as a way to come to a more objective reasoning I present some thoughts here that brought me to the view that God does not exist.

What is God?

To clarify what we are actually questioning we have to know what is meant by 'God'. God seems to be a very vague concept. God might be a wise creature with a beard and extreme abilities that created the earth and the universe. God might be a specific kind of energy, or something unimaginable. God might be everything as a whole. Well, in the last sense God will most likely exist (except for solipsism¹). In the bible it is said that man is created after the image of God himself. Therefore it most likely that God is a creature with extreme capabilities or no limitations at all.

How do we determine existence?

When we experience something or something is experienced by many people, we generally conclude that it is plausible that it exists. Nevertheless, we also experience illusions. For example when you are dreaming you believe you really do the things that you are dreaming. When a placebo is taken and it is believed to be a medicine the illusion of an effect is there. The pre-believe in its working or the hope to be cured influences mental state and might therefore influence your physical state, therefore this placebo can actually have a curing effect. The same thing can happen if you question yourself "if God has effect on you". You will be too biased to give an objective answer to the question. Especially with vague concepts it is easy to relate uncomprehended effects to constitute your vague concept. According to Christian believe God can't be understood by mankind. So even when we proof the existence of God, it will be inconsistent with Christian believe.

To determine the existence of God try to adopt a scientific unbiased method or something approaching this method. Before you do an experiment, define what result will convince you that the hypothesis is true. Ask both questions: "How likely is it that God does exist?" and "How likely is it that God does not exist?". After all it is very difficult to research. New effects, not experienced before, will you correlate them to your vague God concept or to a scientific explanation which might come up in the future?

Analogy with the past

The Germanic god Thor-Donar was to be believed responsible for the effects of thunder. If the god was unhappy he threw thunderbolts from the clouds down to earth. People were offering food to their gods and hoped they would not be harmed by them. Many more gods like this existed, take a look at Greek mythology (or rain rituals) to find examples. Nevertheless hardly anybody does still

¹ "[...] the extreme form of subjective idealism that denies that the human mind has any valid ground for believing in the existence of anything but itself." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2004)

believe in this gods. Why is this? Science came with new explanations for the weather. Explanations that were maybe more complex than the vague god concept (which is hard to dismiss as a result of its vagueness), but the explanations made more sense. They were an extension of the current knowledge and could be easily related to understood phenomena. Many not understood phenomena are related to gods or God by mankind. This might happen because in general it is easier to live with an answer (which suggest some certainty) than with uncertainty. A resulting question from this might be if it is better to fool yourself with a fake explanation than living with the idea that you have a lack of knowledge which might make you restless in finding the correct answer. I don't have an answer to this question, (long term) happiness seems to be one of the highest things to strive for on the other hand to fool yourself will degrade your ability to reason objectively. A lack of objective reasoning might result in less efficiency in general and therefore more difficulty to obtain happiness.

God invented by mankind?

Is God invented by mankind or did God express himself to mankind? I believe God is invented by mankind. I believe this because of the similarity with human beings. Although God is expected to be much different to human beings because its largely different capabilities, according to the bible he should still have a phenotype which is somewhat related to humans (the first two humans were made "in his own image" (Genesis 1:1–2:4)). That seems to be odd, look at different species, depending on their goals, their capabilities, they have different phenotypes. The similarity seemed to be chosen because of simplicity (more understandable, easy to think about, people are used to interact with humans) and because of satisfaction (makes you feel good that you are somewhat godlike).

Unanswered questions

Some people say, if there is no God, who created the earth and the universe? That the universe is created seems to be obvious to them, after all, all other things are created. Mankind thinks in terms of creation. Creation is nothing else than a change in matter or energy organization. We live in an ever changing world due to many parallel ongoing chemical processes. If something is created it is a reorganization of matter. Therefore the idea that there was nothing and afterwards there was something (creation) is a weird idea. Nor godlike creation or the big bang would be a solution to this because of the chicken-egg problem (who created god, where do the chemicals/energy come from to constitute a big bang). More likely energy or matter were always existent.

Conclusion

The existence of God is unlikely because the invention of the God-phenomenon by mankind is likely and because a God as posed in the bible is difficult to fit in a (scientific) model (which is not so difficult for things that are proven to exist, or which are likely to be proven in the near future). Because of the vagueness it is likely that the hypothesis has got a long life instead of hypothesis which is easily to disprove. Therefore the widespread idea is not contributing to its likeliness. In general there seems to be no reason to make the God hypothesis plausible. According to the Ockham's razor principle (well known in science) we don't introduce this extra factor if we don't need it.