

Does God Exist?

Twelve Proofs of the Nonexistence of God

Sébastien Faure

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Publisher's Note

This translation of Sébastien Faure's classic essay, "12 Proofs of the Nonexistence of God" (also published under the title "Does God Exist?") was first issued more than 60 years ago by the Kropotkin Library. That "Library" was, to the best of my knowledge, the work of Italian anarchist immigrants who had fled Mussolini's Italy in the 1920s and 1930s; and the two translators of this pamphlet, Aurora Alleva and D.S. Menico, were members of that admirable group — a group which more than any other was responsible for keeping anarchism alive in the United States in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

That this translation exists at all is remarkable, given that the translators were native Italian speakers and were translating from one secondary language to another (French to English). The result is a comprehensible but far from fluid translation — and, unfortunately, still the only one available in English. (A good Spanish translation by Benjamin Cano Ruiz was published by Editores Mexicanos Unidos in 1979 in the collection, *El pensamiento de Sébastien Faure*.) But despite the flaws in this translation, Faure's meaning is always clear, and this essay remains a very persuasive exposition of the atheist position.

— Chaz Bufe, May 28, 1999

About the Author

The career of Sébastien Faure did not turn out to be exactly as it had been planned. His parents longed to see him enter the Church and, as he was favored by special qualities of intelligence and ardour, become a standard-bearer for the Catholic Hierarchy. Therefore, they confided his intellectual upbringing to Jesuit teachers and schools which we said to have reached a very high, degree of efficiency in teaching the young and promising ones.

Guided by such tutoring, young Faure acquired a vast amount of knowledge and became one of the foremost orators in his land and time. But the faith did not last in heart as long as did the knowledge in his mind. The religion of God was soon superseded in his heart by a deep-rooted devotion to the welfare of mankind, and Faure became an atheist, uncompromising in his life-long battle against Religion and the Church.

Once he had repudiated all beliefs in the authority of God, Sébastien Faure — being a very logical person — repudiated also the right of man to impose his own authority upon man. For the last fifty years or thereabouts, Anarchism has had in France no more convinced, persistent and capable an exponent than Sébastien Faure. As a teacher, as a writer, as a lecturer, his whole life has been dedicated to the cause of liberty and human emancipation. To this day — past his eightieth birthday, undaunted either by persecution or age — he holds a foremost place in the line of those who battle for the spread of knowledge and the triumph of freedom in the world.

His work has been enormous: half a dozen of large books: "La Douleur Universelle", "Propos Subversifs", "Mon Communisme (Le Boniteur Universe!)", "L'imposture Religieuse", etc.; over a score of pamphlets — of which "Douze preuves de l'inexistence de Dieu", herein translated, is one; countless articles on newspapers and magazines (often translated in many languages); and, last but not least, the "Encyclopedie Anarchiste" — a set of four large volumes of 3000 pages,

wherein all the social, economic and cultural problems of Society are examined from the Anarchist standpoint — of which he was the editor and principal contributor.

To this should be added his lectures — thousands of them — each one of which is in itself a masterpiece. For Sébastien Faure is an orator in the classical Latin sense. Not a ranter but an artist of the spoken word, whose appearance on the rostrum is even now an intellectual event. No one can weigh the influence his word has had on the minds of two generations of Frenchmen.

Here is but a sketchy idea of the kind of man Faure is. In the following pages the reader will find a spark of the intellectual light that he has brought to mankind in his lifetime.

Does God Exist?

There are two ways of studying and trying to solve the problem of the inexistence of God. One way is that of eliminating the hypothesis *God* from the field of plausible and necessary conjectures by a clear precise explanation through the exposition of a positive system of the universe, its origin, its successive evolutions and its final scope. But such an exposition would make the idea of God useless and would destroy beforehand the whole metaphysical edifice upon which it has been placed by spiritual philosophers and theologians.

However, *taking in consideration the present status of human knowledge* and duly confining ourselves to that which is demonstrable and has been demonstrated, verifiable and has been verified, we have to admit that there is neither such an explanation nor such a system of the universe.

Of course, there are certain ingenious hypotheses not at all unreasonable; there are various systems, more or less plausible, based on a quantity of facts and observations which give them a very impressive character of probability. Frankly, these systems and suppositions could face the arguments of the theists with some advantage. But, in truth, on this point we have only hypotheses which lack the value of scientific certainties. And, finally, since each being is free to accord his preference for this or that system, the solution of the problem — *for the present, at least* — thus viewed, appears to be held in reserve.

The adepts of all religions are so sure of the advantage they derive from examining the problem thus presented that they constantly try to bring it back to this very point. If they do not get the honors of the fight on this ground — the only one on which they can yet stand fairly well — it is still possible for them to keep the doubt in the minds of their religious brothers. The doubt! A capital point for the co-religionists.

In this hand to hand scuffle where the two opposing theses belabor each other, the theists receive some blows and also deliver some. Poorly or well, they defend themselves. Although the results of the debate are somehow uncertain, the mob, the believers — even if they have been put with their shoulders to the wall — could still claim victory. This is a thing which they do not fail to do with an impudence that has always been peculiar to them. And this comedy succeeds in maintaining the immense majority of the flock under the staff of the shepherd. That is all these “bad shepherds” wish to do.

Putting the Problem within its Precise Terms

Nevertheless, my friends, there is a second way of studying and trying to solve the problem of the inexistence of God. It consists of the examination of the existence of that God which all religions offer for our adoration.

Where would you find a single, reflective, sensible man who would admit this God who, we are told, could exist free of every mystery — as if nothing about Him would be unknown, as if we had received all of His secrets, as if His thoughts had been fully divined? Yet, they dare say of Him: “He did this; He did that. He said this, and He said that. For this reason He spoke; for that end He acted. These things He permits; those things He does not. These actions He will reward; those He will punish. That He did and this He wants because He is infinitely wise, infinitely just, infinitely powerful and infinitely good.”

Alas! Here is a God who makes Himself known. He leaves the Empire of inaccessibility, dispels the clouds which encircle Him, descends from the summits, converses with the mortals, confides

His thoughts and His will and charges some with the propagation of His laws and His doctrines. Not only that: He asks them to represent Him down here and gives them full power of doing and undoing in heaven and on earth.

This God is not the God-Might, the God-Intelligence, the God-Will, the God-Energy who — like everything that is Will, Intelligence, Power and Energy — can be, from time to time and according to circumstances, indifferently good or bad, useful or harmful, just or iniquitous, merciful or cruel. Oh no! This is the God about whom all is perfection and whose existence is and can be compatible — since He is perfectly good, just, wise, powerful, merciful — only in a state of things of which He would be the author and by which His infinite Justice, Wisdom, Power, Goodness and Mercifulness would be affirmed. You all know this God. He is the one taught to the children through the catechism. He is the living and personal God to whom temples are erected, for whom prayers are given and in whose honor sacrifices are made, whom all the clergy and the priesthood of every religious denomination on earth pretend to represent.

He is not the mysterious Principle, the Unknown, nor is He enigmatic Might, impenetrable Power, incomprehensible Intelligence, inexplicable Energy, hypothesis to which the human mind resorts because it lacks the power of explaining! the “hows” and the “whys” of things. He is not the speculative God of metaphysicians but the God that has been profusely described and detailed to us by His representatives. He is, I shall repeat, the God of all religions. Since we are in France, I shall say that He is the God of that religion which has dominated our history for fifteen centuries: that is, the Christian religion. This God I deny, but I am willing to discuss the subject. If we are to derive some positive gains and get some practical results from this lecture, it is befitting to study and analyze the facts involved in the issue.

Who is this God?

Since His procurators on earth have been so polite as to depict Him to us with an abundance of details, let us treasure this gentility and let us examine Him at close range. Let us put Him through the microscope. To properly discuss the subject it is necessary to be well acquainted with it.

This is the God who, with a powerful and fecund gesture, made everything from nothing, who called the emptiness into being, who, of His own will, substituted movement for inertia and universal life for universal death. He is the Creator!

This is the God who, having completed His gesture of creation — rather than re-entering His century-old inactivity and remaining indifferent to the thing created — is concerned with His own work, takes interest in it, administers and governs it. He is the Governor-Providence!

This is the God who, like a Supreme Tribunal, calls us unto Him after death and passes judgment according to our deeds, establishes the measurement of bad and good actions and then imposes, as a last resort and without appeal, the sentence which will make us for centuries to come the happiest or the most unfortunate of beings. He is the Justiciary-Judge!

It is obvious that this God possesses all the attributes and that He does not possess them to an exceptional degree; He possesses them all to an infinite degree. Therefore, He is not only just but infinite Justice; He is not only good but infinite Goodness; He is not only merciful but infinite Mercifulness; He is not only powerful but infinite Power; He is not only wise but infinite Wisdom.

Once more, this God I deny, and with twelve proofs — where one would suffice — I shall undertake to demonstrate the impossibility of His existence.

Dividing the Subject

Here is the order in which I shall present my arguments. I shall divide them in three groups. The first will mainly deal with God the Creator and will consist of six arguments; the second will be concerned chiefly with God the Governor or Providence and will consist of four arguments; the third and last group will deal with God the Judge or Justiciary and will consist of two arguments. So, we shall have six arguments against God the Creator, four against God the Governor and two against God the Judge. These will be the twelve proofs of the inexistence of God.

Now that you know the plan of my exposition, it will be easier for you to follow its elucidation.

Against God the Creator

The Creative Act is Inadmissible

What do we understand by the word “creating”? What does “to create” mean?

Does it mean, perhaps, to take some scattered separate but existing materials and, by utilizing certain experimental principles or applying certain rules, bring them together, re-group, fix and coordinate them in such a way as to make something out of them?

No! This does not mean “to create”. For example: Can one say that a house has been created? No! It has been built. Has a piece of furniture been created? No! It has been made. And, again, has a book been created? No! It has been compiled, printed.

Therefore, taking some existing materials and making something out of them is not creating.

What, then, does “to create” mean?

To create!... Verily, I find myself in difficulty in explaining that which cannot be explained, in defining that which cannot be defined. Nevertheless, I shall try to make myself understood.

To create is to extract something from nothing and with this very nothing do something: it is to call the void into being. Now, I think that we cannot find a single person endowed with reason who could conceive of and admit that something can be extracted from nothing, that nothing can be turned into something.

Just take a mathematician, the most expert of calculators; give him a gigantic black-board; now beg him to write some zeros and some more zeros. Let him add and multiply to his heart's content; let him indulge in all the operations of mathematics. He will never succeed in extracting one single unit from all those zeros.

Nothing is just nothing; with nothing you can do nothing, and the famous aphorism of Lucretius — *Ex Nihilo Nihil* — remains an expression of manifest certainty and evidence.

The creative act is inadmissible, is an absurdity.

To create, then, is a mystical religious expression which can be of value only in the eyes of those persons who are pleased to believe that which they cannot comprehend and on whom faith exerts an imposition conversely proportional to their lack of comprehension. But to any intelligent man, to any observer for whom words have value only in the measure that they represent a reality or a possibility, to create is an expression void of sense.

The hypothesis of the Creator is, then, loth to reason. *The Being-Creator does not exist; He cannot exist!*

“Pure Spirit” Could not have Determined the Universe

To the believers who, in spite of reason, persist in admitting the possibility of creation I shall say that, at any rate, it is impossible to attribute that creation to their God.

Their God is “Pure Spirit”. And I say that the Pure Spirit — the Immaterial — could not have determined the Universe — the Material. This I say for the following reasons.

The Pure Spirit is separated from the Universe not merely by a difference of degree and quantity but by a difference of nature and quality. The Pure Spirit is not and cannot be an amplification of the Universe, and the Universe is not and cannot be a reduction of the Pure Spirit. The difference here is not only a distinction but an antithesis, an antithesis of nature: essential, fundamental, irreducible, absolute.

Between the Pure Spirit and the Universe there is not only a more or less deep ditch that could perchance be jumped over or filled, but there is an abyss whose depth and extension are such that nobody, try as he may, will ever succeed in filling or leaping over.

I challenge the most subtle philosopher, the most expert of mathematicians to establish whatever relation possible — although in the case of cause and effect the relation should be very close — between Pure Spirit and the Universe. The Pure Spirit does not tolerate any material compromise; it does not bear form, body, matter, proportion, extension, duration, depth, surface, volume, color, sound, density. On the contrary, in the Universe all is form, body, matter, proportion, extension, duration, depth, surface, volume, color, sound, density.

How can one admit that the latter was determined by the former?

It is impossible!

At this point of my demonstration I shall draw the following conclusion to the two preceding arguments:

We have seen that the hypothesis of a Power truly creative is inadmissible; we have also seen that, although persisting in the belief of that Power, we could not possibly admit that the Universe, essentially material, could have been determined by the essentially immaterial Pure Spirit. If you believers are so obstinate as to affirm that your God is the Creator of the Universe, I shall hold myself justified in asking you where Matter was originally found.

Now, then, one of the two things: Matter was either *out* of God or *in* God, and you believers cannot find a third place for it. In the first case, that is, if it was *out* of God, it means that God did not need to create Matter because it already existed; rather, it was co-existing, concurrent with Him. Therefore, your God is not Creator.

In the second case, that is, if Matter was *not out* of God, then it was *in* God. Therefore, I conclude: first, that *God* is not Pure Spirit because He carried within Him a particle of Matter. And what a particle! The whole Matter of our material worlds! Second, that *God*, carrying Matter within Him, did not have to create it because it already existed; He merely had to let it out. Therefore, Creation ceases to be a true creative deed and is reduced to a simple act of exteriorization. *In either case there was no Creation.*

Perfection Cannot Determine Imperfection

Were I to ask a believer the question, “Can Imperfection generate Perfection?”, I am sure he would answer “No” without hesitation or fear of erring. Well, I likewise say that Perfection cannot determine Imperfection, and for identical reasons my proposition is as strong as the preceding one. Here, again, between Perfection and Imperfection, there is not only a difference of degree and quantity but a difference of quality and nature — an essential fundamental, irreducible and

absolute antithesis. Here, again, we have not only a more or less deep ditch but an immeasurable and deep abyss which nobody could possibly fill or leap.

Perfection is absolute; Imperfection is relative. Compared with Perfection, which is all, that which is relative and contingent is but nothing. Compared with Perfection, relativity has no value and does not exist. And it is not within the power of any philosopher or mathematician to establish any relation whatsoever between that which is relative and that which is absolute. Such a relation is then impossible — especially when it need be of the rigorous and precise kind which should unite the principle of Cause and Effect.

It is, therefore, impossible that Perfection should determine Imperfection.

Vice versa: there is a direct relation — a fatal and somehow mathematical one — between the work and its artificer; the value of the work is measured by the value of the artificer. As you will know a tree by the fruit it bears, so will you judge the artificer by his work.

If I am to peruse a poorly written work, full of grammatical errors, where sentences are badly constructed, where the style is poor and neglected, where the ideas are common and quotations incorrect, I certainly would not think of attributing so ugly a page of literature to an embosser of phrases, to a master of letters.

If I rest my eyes on an ill-made design in which the lines are wrongly drawn, the rules of proportion and perspective violated, I surely shall not attribute so rudimentary a scrawl to a professor, to an artist, to a master. Without the slightest hesitation I shall say that it is the work of a novice, an apprentice, a child. And I am sure I would make no mistake, for so clearly does the work bear the stamp of its artificer that from it you can judge its author.

Now, then, Nature is beautiful; the Universe is magnificent. I, as much as anybody else, admire the splendors of this everlasting natural spectacle. Nevertheless, no matter how enthusiastic I am about Nature's charms, whatever may be my homage to it, I cannot say that the Universe is perfect, irreproachable and faultless. Nobody dares to hold such an opinion.

The Universe is, then, an imperfect work. I can consequently say that between the work and its author there is always a rigorous, strict, mathematical relation. The Universe is an imperfect work; its author, therefore, cannot be but imperfect.

This syllogism hurls the attribute of Imperfection at the believers' God and implicitly denies Him.

I can yet pursue a different line of reasoning: either God is not the artificer of the Universe (and I express my own conviction) or, if you persist in affirming that He is and the Universe being an imperfect work, your God is also imperfect.

As you see, syllogism or dilemma, the conclusion remains the same. *Perfection cannot determine Imperfection.*

The Active, Necessary, Eternal Being Could not have been at Any Moment Inactive, Useless

If God does exist, He must be eternal, active, necessary.

Eternal? He is so by definition. It is His reason for being. He cannot be conceived enclosed within limit of time; He cannot be imagined as having a beginning and an ending, as an appearing and disappearing being. He exists with time.

Active? Why, yes. He cannot be otherwise since His activity — so the believers say — has been confirmed by the most colossal majestic act: the Creation of the Worlds.

Necessary? Since without Him there would be nought; since He is the author of everything, the initial fire whence everything gushed, the unique and first source from which all has been derived; since He, alone and self-sufficient, had it dependent on His will that either nought or everything should be; He is so and cannot be otherwise.

He is, therefore, eternal, active and necessary.

I then assume, and shall also show, that if He is eternal, active and necessary, He must be eternally active and eternally necessary. Consequently, He could not have been at any moment inactive or unnecessary. This shows, finally, that He has never created.

To say that God is not eternally active is to admit that He has not always been active, that He became so, that He began to be active, that before being so he was not. Since His activity was manifested through His act of creation, it is the same as admitting that during the billions of years possibly preceding creation God was inactive.

To say that God is not eternally necessary is to admit that He has not been always necessary, that He became so, that He began to be so, that before being necessary He was not so. Since the Creation proclaims and testifies to the necessity of God, we must also admit that during the billions of years possibly preceding creation God was useless.

God was useless!

God idle and lazy!

God superfluous and useless!

What a bad situation for the Being essentially active and essentially necessary! We must admit, then, that at all times God has been active and necessary. But, then, He could not have created because the idea of creation absolutely implies the idea of a beginning. Something that begins could not have existed all the time. There necessarily must have been a time when before coming into being the thing was not at all. No matter how long or short the time preceding the created thing may be, it cannot be ignored.

The results are:

Either God is not eternally active and eternally necessary, and in this case He became so with Creation. If it is so, God, before Creation, did not possess the two attributes of activity and necessity. Such a God was incomplete; it was a fragment of God, nothing more. And to become active and necessary, to complete Himself, He needed to create.

Or God is eternally active and eternally necessary, and in this case He has been creating eternally; the creation has always been going on. The Universe has never begun; it existed all the time; it is eternal like God; it is God Himself, and He is lost in it.

If it is so, the Universe never had any beginning; it has not been created.

Therefore, in the first case, God, before Creation, was neither active nor necessary; He was incomplete, that is, imperfect — and, then, He does not exist. In the second case, God, being eternally active and eternally necessary, has not become so and, therefore, He has not created.

It is impossible to conclude otherwise.

The Immutable Could not have Created

If God exists, He is immutable. He does not change; He cannot change.

While in nature everything goes through modification, metamorphosis, transformation, change, and nothing is definite, God, a fixed and immutable point through time and space, is not subject to any modification, does not and cannot know any change whatsoever. He is today what He was yesterday; He will be tomorrow what He is today. Think as you may of God in the far gone centuries or think of Him in the centuries to come, He is constantly identical to Himself.

God is immutable!

I claim that if He has created He is not immutable because in such a case He has changed twice;

If I decide that I want something, I change. It is evident that a change which has brought about this desire to want has taken place within me. If I want today that which I did not want yesterday, it is because certain circumstances around or within me determined the wanting. This new wanting within me constitutes a modification: there is no doubt about this. It is unquestionable. Likewise, to act or to determine oneself to act is to modify oneself. Through and through, it is certain that this double modification — wanting and acting — is especially notable and marked when the point in question is of a more serious resolution and a more important action.

“God has created”, you say. Let it be so. But then He has changed twice: first when He took a determination to create and secondly when, putting in execution this determination, He performed the creative act. If He changed twice, He is not immutable. And if He is not immutable, He is not God; there is no God.

The immutable Being could not have created.

God Could not have Created without a Motive: It is Impossible to Discern One

From whatever side you consider Creation it remains inexplicable, enigmatic, void of sense.

Evidently, if God has created, it is impossible to admit that He performed this grand act — whose consequences had to be fatally proportionate to the act itself, i.e. incalculable — without having been determined by a prime reason.

What can this reason be? What motive could have induced Him to create? By what incentive could He have been moved? What desire had betaken Him? What was the prefixed design? What aim did He want to reach? What was the proposed end?

Multiply queries and questions in this order; turn the problem as you may; consider it under any aspect, and I dare you to solve it in a manner other than with a great deal of subtlety and meaningless prattle.

Take a child brought up in the Christian religion. His catechism and his religion teach him that he has been created by God. Now let us suppose that the child should put this question to himself: “Why has God created and brought me into the world?” He will not succeed in finding a serious and reasonable answer.

Since the child has faith in the experience and knowledge of his teachers and is convinced that they possess particular faculties and special intelligence, let us suppose that he will go to them for an explanation. Because of the character of sacredness and holiness with which priests and ministers encircle themselves, it is logical to believe that they should be better acquainted with the Revealed Truth. Yet, it is clear that when the child asks them why God has created and

brought him into the world, they will not be able to give him a sensible and plausible answer to the simple question. In truth, there is none.

Let us press the question. Let us delve deeply into the problem. Let us examine God before Creation. Let us take Him in His absolute sense. He is alone, self-sufficient and perfectly wise, happy and powerful. Nothing can improve His wisdom; nothing can increase His happiness; nothing can strengthen His power.

Such a God cannot experience any desire because His happiness is infinite; He cannot look toward any aim because nothing is lacking in His perfection; He cannot formulate any plans because nothing can increase His power; He cannot be determined to want anything because He has no need for anything.

Go ahead, you deep philosophers, you subtle thinkers, you able theologians, go ahead and answer this child who is questioning you; tell him why God has created and brought him into the world. I am sure you can only answer that God's designs are impenetrable, and you will hold this answer sufficient. But it would be much wiser for you not to give any answer at all because an answer from you on this matter would mean the ruin of your system and the crumbling of your beloved God. There is only one logical and unrelenting conclusion: If God has created, He has done so without a motive, without an end, not knowing why.

Do you know, my friends, where the consequences of such a conclusion would forcibly take us? To this point:

The difference between the actions of a man endowed with reason and those of a man struck by insanity, that which indicates the responsibility of the former and the irresponsibility of the latter, is the fact that the sane man always knows — or, at any rate, can always know — the motives which have prompted and determined his action. For example, in the case of an important deed whose consequences might involve serious responsibilities, it suffices for the sane man to make a thorough examination of his own conscience, to reconstruct in his mind the series of events that took place, to live again his past hour so that he can discern the mechanism of the movements which determined his actions.

He is not always proud of the motives that urged him; he is often ashamed of the reasons that moved him into action. But, be they vile or generous, noble or ignoble, he always succeeds in discovering those reasons.

An insane person, on the contrary, acts without knowing why, and after having completed his deed, no matter how full of consequences, he cannot account for it. You can press him with as many questions as you can think of, but the poor wretch will only babble a few disconnected phrases and you will never succeed in pulling him out of his incoherences.

Therefore, what distinguishes the deeds of a sane person from those of an insane one is the fact that the deeds of the former can be explained, have a reason for being; their cause and scope, their origin and end can be determined. Those of the latter have no explanation, have no apparent reason for being; the insane himself is unable to determine the scope and the end of his own deeds.

Well, then, if God has created without an aim, without a motive, He has acted like an insane man, *and Creation is an act of insanity.*

Two Capital Objections

To get it over with the God of Creation, it seems to me indispensable to examine two objections.

Pray, believe that in this matter I have an abundance of objections, so that when I mention “two objections” to be examined, I refer to two of them which are considered both classical and capital. Their importance is derived from the fact that with the habit of intelligent discussion the rest of the objections can easily be brought within the realm of these two.

First Objection: “God Escapes Your Comprehension”

They say: “You have no right to talk about God the way you do. You present us with a God-caricature systematically reduced to the proportion which your comprehension is only capable of according. The God which you present is not ours. Our God you cannot conceive because He overtakes you; He escapes your comprehension. Knoweth ye! that whatever in the way of might, wisdom and knowledge might appear fantastic and immense even for the most powerful man is only child’s play to our God. Do not forget that Humanity could not move on the same level with Divinity. Remember that it is as impossible for man to comprehend God’s ways as it is impossible for minerals to imagine the ways of vegetables, for vegetables to conceive of the ways of animals and for animals to understand the ways of men.

“God rises to heights that you could never overtake and occupies summits inaccessible to you.

“Knoweth ye! that no matter how magnificent human intelligence may be, no matter how great an effort it may realize, no matter how persistent the effort may be, human intelligence will never rise up to God. Finally, remember that, however great a man’s mind might be, it is finite and, consequently, cannot conceive the Infinite.

“Have, then, enough loyalty and modesty to confess that it is impossible for you to comprehend and explain God. However, the fact that you can neither comprehend nor explain God does not give you, as of consequence, the right to deny Him.”

And here is my answer to the theists.

You are giving me, my good sirs, some advice on loyalty with which I am very well inclined to conform. You are calling me down for the legitimate modesty becoming to the humble mortal I happen to be. Loyalty and modesty! From neither I like to depart.

So you say that God overtakes me, that He escapes my comprehension? So be it. I shall admit that and also that the finite can neither conceive nor explain the Infinite: this last contention is so true, so evident that I have no desire to oppose it. Up to this point we are in full accord, and I hope you are satisfied.

Only, gentlemen, on my turn, permit me to give you the same advice on loyalty; please, allow that I call you down for the very same modesty. Are you not men as I? Does not God overtake you as He does me? Does not God escape your comprehension as much as He does mine? Or have you the pretense of moving on the same level with Divinity? Have you the affrontery of thinking and the foolishness of stating that with a simple flap of a wing you have reached those summits occupied by God? Are you so presumptuous as to affirm that your finite mind has embraced the Infinite?

I do not want to offend you, gentlemen, by believing that you are tainted with this extravagant vanity.

You have, then, as I had, the loyalty and the modesty to confess that if it is impossible for me to comprehend and explain God, you also hit against the same impossibility. And, finally, be sincere enough to admit that if the fact that I cannot conceive and explain God does not give me the right to deny Him, the very same fact, which also holds true for you, does not give you the right to affirm Him!

Do not think for a moment, gentlemen, that we are now on equal conditions. It was you who first affirmed the existence of God, and you should first withdraw your affirmation. Would I ever have thought of denying God if, when I was yet a child, it had not been imposed upon me to believe in Him; if, when an adult, I had not heard it affirmed all around me; if I had not constantly seen churches and temples erected and dedicated to God? It is your affirmation that provokes and justifies my denials.

Cease to affirm, and I shall cease to deny!

Second Objection: “There is no Effect without a Cause”

This second objection seems to be quite dangerous. Many consider it almost indisputable. It originates from the spiritualist philosophers.

These gentlemen say in a self-assuring manner: “There is no effect without a cause; the Universe is an effect; then, this effect has a cause which we call God.”

The argument is well represented; it seems well construed and solidly based.

All depends, though, on proving whether it really is so.

This form of exposition is what is called a syllogism. A syllogism is an argument consisting of three propositions, the first two being called the major and minor premises and the third called consequence or conclusion.

For a syllogism to be impregnable two conditions are necessary:

1. the major and minor premises must be exact;
2. the third proposition, the conclusion, must be logically derived from the preceding premises.

If the syllogism brought forth by the spiritualist philosophers embodies these two conditions, it really is indisputable, and all that would be left for me to do would be to bow in recognition; if it lacks) one of these two conditions, then the syllogism is void, valueless, and the whole argument falls short.

In order to establish the soundness of the syllogism, let us examine the three propositions which constitute it.

The first proposition is the major premise: “There is no effect without a cause.”

Philosophers, you are right. There is no effect without a cause: nothing can be more exact than this. There is not, there cannot be any effect without a cause. Effect is nothing else but the following, the continuation, the end of a cause. When you say effect, you say cause as well; the idea effect *immediately* and *necessarily* calls for the idea cause. Would it be otherwise, the effect without a cause should be an effect from nought. This is absurd. Therefore, we agree on this proposition.

The second proposition is the following: “The Universe is an effect.” Ah! but here I ask you to reflect; I demand some elucidations. On what do you base so sure and definite an affirmation? What is the phenomenon or the aggregation of phenomena, what is the observation or the sum of observations which warrant so categorical a statement?

First of all, do we know the Universe well enough? Have we studied, scanned, examined and understood the Universe in such a manner that would permit us to be so definite about it? Have we penetrated its inward parts? Have we explored the infinite spaces? Have we descended to the oceans’ depths? Have we ascended every summit? Do we know all the things within the domain of the Universe? Have we pulled all the veils, penetrated all mysteries, solved all enigmas? Have we seen all, touched all, felt all, observed all? Have we nothing else to discover, nothing else to learn? In short, are we in a position to give a formal appraisal, a definite opinion, a certain decision about the Universe?

Nobody can answer all these questions affirmatively. We would have to pity deeply the fool or the insane who would dare to pretend complete knowledge of the Universe.

The Universe! It is to say, not only the humble planet which we inhabit and on which we drag our miserable carcasses, not only the millions of known stars and planets which are part of our solar system, but also the other numerous Worlds whose existence we either know or suppose, whose number, distance and extensions are yet incalculable.

Should I say: “The Universe is a cause”, I would surely provoke the cries and protests of the believers. And yet my statement would be no more crazy than theirs. My temerity would be equal to theirs, that’s all.

If I observe the Universe as man’s acquired knowledge permits me, I see something like an incredibly complex and entangled whole, an inextricable and colossal piling up of causes and effects which determine, link, succeed, repeat and penetrate themselves. I see that the whole forms a kind of endless chain whose links are steadfastly bound. I notice that each of these links is, from time to time, cause and effect: effect of the cause which determined it and cause of the effect which follows it.

Who can say: “Here is the first link, the link-Cause”? Who can say: “Here is the last link, the link-Effect”? And who can say: “There is necessarily a First-Cause, a Last-Effect”?

The second proposition, “The Universe is an effect,” therefore, lacks the indispensable condition of exactness. Consequently, the famous syllogism has no value.

I add that even if this second proposition would be exact, before accepting the conclusion, it should be definitely proved that the Universe is the effect of a unique cause, of a prime cause, of the causes’ cause, of a causeless cause, of the eternal cause.

Unmoved and without worry, I shall wait for this demonstration. This demonstration has been tried many times but has never been successful. We can easily say that this demonstration will never be established seriously, positively and scientifically.

Finally, I add that even if the entire syllogism would be correct, it would be easy for me to turn it against the thesis of the God-Creator and in favor of my contention.

Let us prove it:

- There is no effect without a cause?
- All right.
- Now, the Universe is an effect?
- Agreed!
- Then this effect has a cause and it is this cause which we call God?

— Let it be so.

But, my good theists, do not proclaim your triumph yet. Listen to me attentively.

If it is evident that there is no effect without a cause, it is also plainly evident that there is no cause without an effect. There is not, there cannot be a cause without effect. When you say “cause”, you say “effect”? the idea of cause *necessarily* implies and *immediately* calls for the idea effect. Otherwise, the cause without the effect would be a cause of nothing, and it would be as absurd as an effect of nothing would be. Therefore, it is well agreed that there is no cause without effect.

Now, then, you say that the cause of the Universe- effect is God. Therefore, it is proper to say that the effect of the God-cause is the Universe.

It is impossible to separate the effect from the cause, but it is equally impossible to separate the cause from the effect.

Finally, you affirm that the God-cause is eternal, and I conclude that the Universe-effect is also equally eternal because to an eternal cause must, necessarily, correspond an eternal effect. Otherwise, during the billions of centuries which perhaps preceded the creation of the Universe, God would have been a cause without effect — an impossibility, a cause of nothing — an absurdity. Consequently, God being eternal, the Universe is also so; if the Universe is eternal it means that it has never been created. Is that clear?

Against God the Governor or Providence

The Governor Denies the Creator

There are those – and they are legion – who obstinately persist in believing. I understand that strictly speaking one can believe in either a perfect Creator or a necessary Governor, but it seems impossible that anybody can reasonably believe in both at the same time. These two perfect Beings categorically exclude each other. To affirm one is to deny the other; to proclaim the perfection of the first is to confess the uselessness of the second; to proclaim the necessity of the second is to deny the perfection of the first. In other words, one can believe in the perfection of one or in the necessity of the other, but it is unreasonable to believe in the perfection of both. One has to choose.

If the Universe created by God would have been a perfect work; if in its entirety and in its minor details this work would have come out without defects; if the mechanism of this gigantic creation would have been faultless; if its movement would have appeared to be so perfect as to prevent any fear of unbalance and damage; if, in short, the work would be worthy of this incomparable artist called God, the necessity of a Governor would not be felt in any way.

Once the first initial thumb stroke had been given, once the formidable machine had been set in motion, the only thing to do would have been to leave this work to itself with no fear of possible accidents.

What would be the use of this engineer, of this mechanic whose task is to watch, to direct this machine and to intervene for repairs and corrections after it has been set in motion? The engineer would have been useless and the mechanic superfluous. Therefore, in this case we would have had no Governor.

If the Governor exists, it is because his presence, his surveillance and his intervention are indispensable. The necessity of a Governor is a challenge and an insult to the Creator; his intervention shows the/ clumsiness, the incapacity and the impotence of the Creator,

The Governor denies the perfection of the Creator.

The Multiplicity of Gods is Proof that None Exists

The God-Governor is and must be powerful and just: infinitely powerful and infinitely just.

We assume that the multiplicity of religions proves that He is lacking in both Power and Justice. Let us put aside the defunct Gods, the abolished cults, the extinct religions which are counted by thousands. Let us be concerned only with the existing religions.

According to the most reliable calculations, there are today 800 different religions, claiming the domination of the 1600 millions of consciences living on our planet. It is doubtless that every one of these religions claims for itself the right to represent and possess the only true, authentic,

indisputable and unique God and¹ that the rest of the Gods are bootlegged, false, ridiculous, deserving to be dutifully combatted and destroyed.

We shall add that if instead of 800 there would be only 10 or even two religions, our contention would hold true just the same.

We repeat, then, that the multiplicity of Gods proves the existence of none because it certifies that God lacks Power and Justice.

A powerful God could have spoken to all as easily as to a few; He could have revealed Himself to all instead of to a few, without any additional effort.

A man, however powerful, can reveal himself only to a limited number of people; his vocal chords have only a limited strength. But God...? God can speak to a multitude as easily as He can speak to a small group. When the voice of God rises high, its echo can and should resound over the four cardinal points. God's word ignores distance and obstacles; it crosses the oceans, ascends the summits and overtakes space without a shade of difficulty.

Since He chose — as Religion affirms — to speak to humanity, to reveal Himself, to confide His plans to them, to indicate His will and let His laws be known, He could have spoken to all of them rather than to a handful of privileged ones. Tho fact that some deny and ignore Him and others oppose Him with rival Gods indicates that He has not done so.

Is it not wise, under the circumstances, to think that God never spoke to anybody and that His supposed multiple revelations are nothing more than multiple impostures? Or that if He spoke only to some, it was because He could not speak to all? This being so, I accuse Him of impotence, and where this accusation does not apply I accuse Him of injustice.

In fact, what would you think of this God who reveals Himself to some and at the same time hides from others? What would you think of this God who speaks to some and remains silent toward others? Do not forget that His representatives affirm that He is the Father and that all of us, without discrimination, are the beloved children of this Father who reigns in Heaven.

What would you think, then, of this Father who tenderly frees some privileged ones from the anguishes of doubt and the tortures of hesitancy by revealing Himself to them and at the same time deliberately dooms the immense majority of His children to the torment of uncertainty? What would you think of this Father who to some of His children reveals Himself in the full sparkling splendor of His Majesty and for the others remains encircled in complete darkness? What would you think of this Father who, while exacting worship, reverence and adoration from all His children, lets only a few chosen ones understand the words of truth and deliberately refuses the same favor to others?

If you maintain that such a Father is a good and just one, do not blame me for holding a diverse opinion.

The multiplicity of religions proclaims that God lacks Power and Justice. On the other hand, according to the believers, God must be infinitely just and powerful. If one of these two attributes is missing, God is not perfect. If God is not perfect, He does not exist. *The multiplicity of Gods proves that none exists.*

God is not Infinitely Good: Hell Proves it

God-Governor or Providence is and must be infinitely good, infinitely merciful.

The existence of Hell, however, proves that He is not.

Follow my reasoning attentively: Since God is free, He could very well not have created us; yet He created us. Since God is omnipotent, He could have created all of us good; instead He has created us bad and good. Since God is good, He could admit all of us in Heaven after our death and be satisfied with the trials and tribulations we undergo on earth. Since God is just, He could admit to Heaven those of us who are worthy and refuse admission to the perverse ones. But rather than damn the latter to Hell He could mercifully destroy them after death. We presume that He who can create can also destroy. He who can give life can also deprive it.

Let us see. You are not Gods. You are neither infinitely good nor infinitely merciful. Nevertheless, I am certain that if you could save a fellow human being a tear, a trial, a sorrow, you would do it gladly. Yet, you are not infinitely good or infinitely merciful. Are you, then, better and more merciful than the God of the Christians? After all, Hell exists. The Church teaches that it does. In fact, Hell is the dreadful vision which frightens the children, the elders and the timid souls; it is the specter which is evoked at the bed of the hopelessly sick whom the coming of death deprives of energy and lucidity.

Well, then, the Christian God, the same one who is supposed to be the God of piety, forgiveness, indulgence, goodness and mercy tosses — and forever — some of His own children into this dreadful abode spiked with cruel tortures and ineffable torments.

What a good merciful Father!

You know the words of the Scriptures: "...for many be called, but few chosen." And if I am not mistaken, the number of the chosen ones will be small and that of the damned large. This statement is so cruel and monstrous that many attempts have been made to change or modify its meaning.

It does not matter. Hell exists, and it is evident that — regardless of the number — the condemned will suffer these atrocious tortures. Let us see who will benefit from these tortures. The chosen ones? Evidently not. By definition the chosen ones will be the just, the good, the virtuous who love and understand, and it is impossible to believe that their inexpressible happiness could be increased by the sufferings of their own brothers.

Would the beneficiaries be the damned ones themselves? No, because the Church affirms that the tortures of the unfortunates will last unto the centuries to come and will never decrease. Who then? Aside from the chosen and the damned ones there is no one else but God.

Would God, then, be the only one to benefit from the tortures inflicted on the damned ones? Would this infinitely good and merciful Father sadistically gloat over the agonies of His own children? If this be the case, I would look upon this God as the most ferocious executioner, the most implacable torturer. Hell bears proof that God is neither good nor merciful. The existence of a merciful God is incompatible with the existence of Hell.

Either there is no Hell, or God is not infinitely good and merciful.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of Evil gives me the fourth and last argument against the God-Governor and, at the same time, my first argument against the God-Judge.

I am not saying that the existence of Evil — physical and moral — is incompatible with the existence of God. I shall say, though, that the existence of Evil is incompatible with the existence of a God *infinitely good and powerful*.

This argument is known, if not for anything else, for the numerous but nevertheless sterile refutations of which it has been the subject.

This argument is attributed to Epicurus; it is, therefore, over twenty centuries old, but age has not deprived it of its vigor.

Here it is. Evil exists. All sensitive beings know its pain. God, who knows everything, cannot ignore it. Then, one of these two things is true:

Either God would like to suppress Evil and cannot do it;

Or God could suppress Evil and does not want to do so.

In the first instance, God appears sympathetic toward our sorrows and our trials and would want to destroy Evil so that happiness would reign on earth. In this case, God shows Himself good, but He cannot destroy Evil. Therefore, He is not omnipotent.

In the second instance, God could destroy Evil. Since He is omnipotent, His willingness to destroy Evil should suffice. But He does not want to do so. Consequently, He is not infinitely good.

In one instance God is powerful but not good; in the other He is good but not powerful.

Now, for God to exist it is not sufficient for Him to have one of these two qualities; He *must* have both. This contention has never been refuted, but it has been disputed. Here is a fair example of such disputations:

“You present the problem of Evil erroneously and wrongly hold God responsible for it. Certainly Evil exists, but the responsibility for it must be given to man. God did not want man to be an automaton, a machine functioning mechanically. God, in creating man, gave him freedom and generously left him the faculty of using this freedom as he pleased. If man wastes this freedom in an odious and criminal manner, it is unjust to blame God for it. A sense of equity demands that man be held responsible.”

This is the classical disputation.

What is its worth? Nothing. Let me explain. First of all, we need to differentiate between physical and moral evils.

Under physical evil we can enumerate sickness, pains, accidents, old age and its trail of infirmities, death and the cruel loss of our loved ones: babies are born who die within a day with pain as their only experience; a large number of people live whose life is an endless chain of sorrows and afflictions and who would have been better off had they not been born at all.

In the realm of nature, cataclysms, fires, draughts, famines, floods, tempests and the whole sum of tragic fatalities spelling agony and death come under the classification of evil.

Who would dare say that man is responsible for this physical evil?

Who does not understand that *if God has created the Universe*, if He has set for it rigorous governing laws, and, that if physical evil is the sum of the fatalities resulting from the normal play of the forces of nature, the responsible author of these calamities is, undoubtedly, He who has created the Universe, He who governs it?

It is indisputable. God who governs the Universe is alone responsible for physical evil.

This should suffice. But I maintain that moral evil is as much attributable to God as is physical evil. In fact, if God exists, He must have presided over the organization of both the physical and moral worlds; man, although victim of the consequent physical and moral evils, is responsible for neither.

What I have to say on moral evil I shall bring forth in my third and last series of arguments.

Against God the Judge

Being Irresponsible, Man can be Neither Punished nor Rewarded

What are we?

Have we presided over the conditions of our birth? Have we been asked whether we were glad to be born? Have we been called upon to set our destiny? Have we ever had our say on any point?

If we had had our say, we would have bestowed upon ourselves all the good things of life: health, strength, beauty, intelligence, courage, goodness. Everyone would have embodied in himself total perfection; each would have been some kind of a miniature God.

But what are we?

Are we what we wanted to be? Certainly not.

Granted the hypothesis God, we are — since He created us — what He wanted us to be.

God, being free, could have not created us at all. God, being so good, could have created us less perverse than we are. He could have made us just, vigorous, valiant. This omnipotent God could have presented us with all physical, moral and intellectual gifts.

But, for the third time, what are we?

We are what God wanted us to be, for He has created us to His satisfaction and caprice.

If it is admitted that God exists and that He has created us, there is no other answer.

God has given us our senses, intellectual faculties, the means of comprehension, hearing, reasoning and acting. He has foreseen, wanted and determined our conditions of life; He has pre-established our needs, our wishes, our passions, our thoughts, our hopes, our aversions and our aspirations. The entire human mechanism is what He wanted it to be. He has conceived and regulated, in its details, the environment in which we move about; He has prepared the circumstances which, in every moment, will affect our will and determine our actions.

Before a God so formidably armed, man is irresponsible.

Man's freedom is proportionate to the degree of independence he enjoys. He who is completely independent is completely free. He who is completely dependent is completely a slave and has no freedom at all.

If God exists, man, in relation to God, is placed in the second of these two positions. Man is in the position of the slave, and the greater the distance between him and his Master the greater his servitude will be.

If God exists, He is the only one who knows, who has Power and Will; He is the only one who is free. Man knows nothing, wants nothing, has no power; his dependence is absolute.

If God exists, He must be everything; man is nought.

Man, in this state of slavery, fully dependent on God, cannot have any responsibility whatsoever. And if he is irresponsible, he cannot be judged.

Every judgment implies reward or punishment. But the deeds of an irresponsible being — having no moral value — escape all sanctions. The deeds of an irresponsible being might be

useful or detrimental. Morally, however, they are neither good nor bad, and it is impossible to either punish or reward them with equity.

God, appointing Himself Justiciary, punishing and rewarding man — the irresponsible — is an usurper; He arrogates an arbitrary right and uses it in contempt of all sense of justice.

From what has been said above, I draw the following conclusions:

1. That the responsibility of both physical and moral evils is to be attributed to God;
2. *That God is not a just Judge since man — irresponsible being — can be neither rewarded nor punished.*

God Violates the Fundamental Rules of Equity

Even if we would admit for a moment that man is a responsible being, we could prove that Divine Justice violates the most elementary rules of equity.

Admitting that the practice of justice implies a consequent sanction and that it is the judge's task to fix such a sanction, we also must admit that there is a generally recognized rule which establishes a fair proportion between merit and reward, crime and punishment.

Once this principle is accepted, we can safely state that the best practicing judge is the one who fairly and proportionately applies reward to merit and punishment to crime; that the ideal perfect judge is the one who can fix a rigorous mathematical relation between deed and sanction. Such an elementary rule of justice can be accepted by all.

God, however, with His administration of justice in reference to Heaven and Hell, disregards this rule. In fact, He violates it. Man's merits, whatever they be, are limited, but the reward for them — Heaven — is unlimited, if not for any other reason at least for its character of perpetuity.

Man's crimes are also limited, but punishment for them — Hell — is unlimited, if not for any other reason at least because it is eternal.

Therefore, we have a disproportion between merit and reward as well as between crime and punishment. *God violates the fundamental rules of equity.*

My thesis is finished. What remains for me to do is to recapitulate and conclude.

Recapitulation

I promised you a definite substantial demonstration that God does not exist. I believe I can say that I have kept my promise.

Please do not forget that I did not propose to give you a System of the Universe which would have rendered useless the recourse to the hypothesis of a supernatural Force or Principle prior and superior to the Universe.

With due spirit of fairness I warned you that on those grounds the problem — *with the present status of human knowledge* — affords no definite solution and that the only reasonable attitude in this respect would be one of waiting and hoping.

The God whose impossibility of existence I set out to prove — and have, in fact, proved — is the God of all religions, the God-Creator, the God-Governor and Judge, the God infinitely wise, powerful, good and just whom the clergy claims to represent on earth and whom it wants us to

worship. There is no room for equivocal positions: this is the God that I deny and, if we have to benefit from a discussion, this is the God they have to defend from my attacks.

They might try to take you on other insidious grounds, but a discussion on any other grounds will be a diversion and an additional proof that the God of religion can be neither defended nor justified.

I have proved that, as a Creator, God is inadmissible, imperfect and inexplicable; I have established that, as a Governor, God is useless, powerless, cruel, hateful and despotic; finally, I have demonstrated that, as a Judge, God is an unworthy magistrate and a violator of every essential rule of equity.

Conclusion

However, this is the God that, from time immemorial, has been taught and is being taught to the people.

How many crimes have been committed in His name! What hatred, wars and disasters His representatives have brought about! Of how much pain this God has been the source! How much harm He still engenders!

For centuries Religion has kept humanity in fear, has brutified it with superstitions and has made it meek through eternal submission.

Will, then, the day never rise when humanity — ceasing to believe in this so-called eternal justice, its fantastic decrees and problematic amends — will really and earnestly work to bring about immediate, positive and fraternal justice on earth?

Will the hour never strike when man — wise to the fallacy of heavenly hopes and consolations — will make of this planet an Eden of peace, freedom and abundance whose doors will be open to all?

For too long a time the Social Contract has been inspired by a God without justice. It is high time that it be inspired by a justice without God. For too long a time relations among nations and individuals have been derived from a God without philosophy. It is high time that they be derived from a philosophy without God.

For centuries kings, rulers, churches, leaders have been treating the people like a vile miserable herd to be fleeced and butchered. And for centuries the disinherited — thanks to the deceitful mirage of Heaven and the terrible frightful vision of Hell — have been docile and have stood misery and slavery. It is time that this odious sacrilege, this abominable fraud come to an end!

To you who listen to me, I say: Open your eyes, look, observe, understand. The heaven of which they have incessantly spoken to you, the heaven with which they try to lessen your misery, deaden your pain and suffocate the protest which, in spite of everything, comes from your heart, is unreal and deserted. Only your hell is peopled and positive.

Enough of lamentations; lamentations are fruitless.

Enough of prostrations; prostrations are sterile.

Enough of prayers; prayers are impotent.

Arise, ye men! On your feet! And with a rebellious cry of indignation declare an inexorable war against that God whose depressing veneration has been imposed upon you for so many years. Free yourselves of the imaginary tyrant and shake the yoke of His self-appointed representatives on earth.

Remember, however, that by this first move — of liberation you will have attained only a part of your goal.

A partial liberation would serve no purpose. It is necessary that, along with the chains with which the imaginary Gods have spiritually bound you, you also break those with which the passing but actual gods of the earth have bound you physically and materially. Remember!

When you will have chased away both the earthly and the heavenly Gods, when you will have liberated yourselves from the masters above and the masters below, when you will have completed this double act of liberation, then you will escape Hell and attain Paradise!

Only then!

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