

Purple Spotted Ground Squirrels

The Illogicity of Atheism

By [Jim Shaul](#)

For "[Tips for the Religiously Curious](#)" on [Name the Unknown](#).

a•the•ism

[ey-thee-iz-uhm]

noun

1. the doctrine or belief that there is no God.
2. disbelief in the existence of a supreme being or beings.

(Dictionary.com)

The problem is, of course, one of proportion. Atheism is either 1) a claim that there is no God in the universe, or 2) a rejection of other people's beliefs in God. The Second claim is logical, in and of itself. It is simply asserting that internally, intellectually, they have not been convinced by any evidence brought forth that would support the claim by others that God exists. The First claim is about what actually exists in the universe (metaphysics). The Second claim is about the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and specifically, in this case, what does it take to get someone to "believe" something.

Number 2 is not a problem, per se. Lots of people, all of us, as a matter of fact, "don't believe" lots of things. We are faced with claims and assertions every day. We simply don't believe (take it to be the case based on a second party's assertion) everything we are told by others.

Number 1, however, is problematic. Number 1 asserts something NOT about what is in the atheist's head, but about what is in the universe – or more specifically, what is NOT in the universe.

In claiming that no God exists in the universe, atheism suffers from the logical problem that anyone suffers when claiming the nonexistence of anything. I can make the claim that there are no packages of Twinkies at the center of planer earth or that there is not a planet revolving around a specific star in some far distant galaxy. Anyone can "claim" the non-existence of anything. That is easy. The problem comes in when looking at how and why anyone else should accept the claim. This is the case with any claim. A second, more profound problem comes when the claim is about the non-existence of something.

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Claiming something exists and wanting others to accept the claim requires the person making the claim to bring forth demonstrable evidence = proof of the existence of the thing, usually showing the thing to the other person. You can also attempt to get others to accept your claim by analytic evidence (evidence by definition) which is tough to do, unless you are both mathematicians or theoretical physicists. In short, getting others to accept your claim about the existence of something can happen with both of you being in the same room and one of you bringing out the evidence. If Bob wanted Ted to accept his claim that Purple Spotted Ground Squirrels exist, he could simply pull one out of his backpack and show it to Ted, and the deal is done. If he didn't have one (no first-hand experiential proof), he could of course, show Ted a series of other demonstrable proofs, exhibits (such as fuzzy photos, foggy videos, plaster casts of footprints), or credible testimonies (accounts of trusted eyewitnesses). I mean, come on, let's be honest, what would it take for you to be fully convinced about the existence of Bigfoot? (You saw that coming, didn't you?) To be fully convinced, you would want hard evidence, incontrovertible proof (such as seeing his body lying on a slab in a mortuary, standing in a cage, or such). [To read more on the nature of Proof, check out the paper in my blog under [Critical Thinking](#).]

In short, you can prove something exists by producing a single example of the thing. Boom, you are done.

Proving something doesn't exist is an entirely different animal.

We also have two options here: Prove it doesn't exist by definition (analytically) or prove it doesn't exist by demonstration (exhibits = demonstrable proof).

Can you support a claim that there are no Purple Spotted Ground Squirrels on planet earth by definition? Can you claim that somehow they cannot exist by definition? (It is possible to do this, by the way, like claiming that no 4-sided triangles exist on planet earth. One would not need to bring forth exhibits; all you need to do is define it and you are done proving it.)

I think not. There are other purple colored (even purple spotted) animals on the planet. So, I ask again, can you reject the claim by definition?

I think not. Therefore, you have to give demonstrable proof (first-hand experience, exhibits, or credible testimony). So, let's say you firmly believe that no Purple Spotted Ground Squirrels (hereinafter PSGS) exist on planet earth (God knows why) and you want to convince someone else. You get in your three-masted ship, invite your guest to come sail away, and sail off, taking this person all over the whole planet and when you come back, you have not seen a single one. Have you now proven their non-existence? Duh, of course not. All you can claim is that you didn't see any. There might have been one in Portugal when you were sailing around Argentina,

and by the time you got to Portugal, it could have scurried over to Spain. Lack of first-hand experience does not prove non-existence.

What would it take to support a claim of non-existence of SPGS's on planet earth? One would have to be able to be everywhere at once on the planet. This is known as simultaneous comprehensive knowledge of the set. This might be tough to do.

Now, if my set (area within which something exists) was smaller or my individual item was larger, it would be easier. I could claim that no Hippopotami exist in my office. I currently have simultaneous comprehensive knowledge of all the space in my office that could hold a hippo. However, I could not claim that there are not PSGS's in my office because there are lots of places that little critter could be hiding at the moment. I could not logically support a claim of their non-existence in my office...only that I did not see any.

As I said above, it is a problem of proportion.

If my item is too small and/or my set (the area within which I claim non-existence) is too big, then I have a real problem.

So, what about the claim that God does not exist? Can we support that claim by definition? I think not (or at least I can say that I am not aware of such a definition). If not, then it has to be supported by demonstrable proof. Therefore, you get in your starship and invite your friend to come sail away and fly around the entire universe, coming back without having seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted God. Have you proven to the lad that God does not exist? Noper. The most you can logically claim is that you didn't have any experience of God.

The only way you can logically support your claim that God does not exist is to have simultaneous comprehensive knowledge of the set. You could have sailed in your starship to the Andromedan Galaxy, and while there, God was over hanging out with the Klingons (remember, God loves everyone). The only way to logically support your claim of the non-existence of God is to have simultaneous comprehensive knowledge of the universe. Get it? The only way to demonstrate that there is no God is for you to be everywhere at once in the universe and not have experienced God. Hmmm...do you see the problem? The only being who could demonstrate that there is no God is a being who could be everywhere at once in the universe... The only being who could logically support the claim that God does not exist is an omniscient (knows everything), omnipresent (present everywhere) being.

The only person who could logically support a claim of atheism is God.

That, my friends, would be illogical. (That is, unless God has a serious self-image problem and doubts His own existence.)

Therefore, to support the claim that there is no God in the universe would be illogical also.

Please note, this does NOT prove that Atheism is wrong. It just points out a logical flaw in the argument, claim, and support. Atheism could still be true. It just would not be logical to make the claim and try to support it.

On the other hand, you could claim personal Agnosticism.

ag·nos·ti·cism

[ag-**nos**-tuh-siz-uhm]

noun

1. the doctrine or belief of an agnostic.
2. an intellectual doctrine or attitude affirming the uncertainty of all claims to ultimate knowledge.

(dictionary.com)

This is the position that one does not individually have enough information to support a claim of the existence of God. This is simply a claim of present insufficiency of information and therefore uncertainty. All of us are agnostic about some things. As long as we are open to new information and have an open mindedness to logical arguments and solid proof, we are on a healthy path.