

ENVISIONING GOD AS THE SUPERHUMAN

A Study on the Errors in Atheists' and Agnostics' Perception of God



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Abstract

This article focuses on a fundamental conceptual error often made in atheistic and agnostic criticism of God: The tendency to think of God as a human-like being. This approach is fueled by psychological expectations that God is a being who feels, gets angry, punishes, or forgives. However, these criticisms are not aimed directly at God Himself, but at the limited conceptions that people have formed in their minds. The article emphasizes the difference between the ontological reality of God and the epistemological models formed in human minds and argues that ignoring this difference makes philosophical discussions shallow and reductionist. At the same time, pantheistic approaches that attempt to reduce God to the nature of the universe are discussed as different forms of this humanistic modeling. The article shows that criticisms of the theistic model of God are often based on superficial contextual errors, disconnected from other elements of the system, such as free will, testing and the afterlife. Finally, it is emphasized that the attitude of asking God "*how should you have created*" is epistemologically contradictory and far from a rational basis.

Keywords: God, Philosophy, Ontology, Epistemology, Rationality, Atheism, Agnosticism, Argument from Evil, Problem of Evil, Concept of God, Fallacy

The Error of Humanoid Modeling in Criticism of God

The criticisms of God in atheistic and agnostic¹ thought, historically observable in both ancient and contemporary ways of thinking, are often based on the mistake, consciously or unconsciously, of treating God as a human being. At the heart of this approach is a deep psychological expectation that God should feel, rage, react, and even punish or forgive like a parent. This kind of approach, expressed in phrases such as “*God should be like this, God should do like that*”, is not a criticism of God Himself, but of the model that humans have created in their own minds. In other words, these expectations and criticisms stem not from God Himself, but from how humans perceive and model Him.

Of course, the misinterpretation of the conceptions of God developed in some forms of theistic beliefs and mythological god figures have a role in the emergence of such a perception. So much so that even some theist individuals who claim to believe in God may have similar attitudes based on humanistic expectations. However, at this point, the main issue that should not be overlooked is the difference between the ontological existence of God and the epistemological conceptions created by humans. In other words, what kind of being God is (*ontological level*) and how He is comprehended by human reason and perception (*epistemological level*) are confused and this difference is ignored.

As a created and limited being, human beings cannot fully encompass the ontological essence of God and know Him in an absolute way. Therefore, in order to talk about God, humans inevitably need modeling, that is, conceptions formed at the epistemological level. These conceptions are inevitably shaped by the human view of God, because there is no other possibility. What needs to be emphasized at this point is that these models are limited not by God Himself, but by the human capacity to comprehend. Therefore, in order for discussions about God to be healthy, they should be conducted with this awareness, that is, epistemological conceptions should not be confused with ontological reality.

On the Problematicity of the Phrase “Nature of God”

At this point, even using a phrase like “*God's nature*” is problematic. For to speak of God having a nature would mean limiting God like created beings. However, God is a reality independent of the human mind and perception. What we refer to as “*the nature of God*” is in fact only the way humans perceive God, in other words, their conception of God.

In the ontological context, God does not have a specific, fixed “*nature*” because God is the ground of existence for all being, with an absolute and unlimited potential. The “*nature of God*” discourse is actually the result of human beings' efforts to fit God into their own frameworks of understanding. However, this effort cannot encompass God's own reality, because all conceptions formed at the epistemological level are necessarily independent of God's reality and are bounded by the limits of human cognition.

The human being who wants to comprehend God makes another mistake here: He tries to understand God's nature by looking at the nature of the universe. In other words, he interprets observable phenomena such as natural laws, regularities and logical consistencies in the

¹ Agnostics are included because in practice they behave no differently from atheists.

universe as if they were the nature of God, and even perceives God as this order itself. Approaches such as pantheism have largely emerged from this idea. However, this is no different from other epistemological models, for such approaches also reduce God to the structure of the universe and attribute to God the systematics observed by human beings. However, God is an ontological reality that does not fit into such models and is independent of the universe.

Especially in Islam, this conception is shaped through revelation and is based on sacred texts. However, since even the interpretation of these texts takes place within the limits of human reason, the resulting conception of God is not always final, but reflects a representative understanding. The way in which revelation came was also realized with the awareness of this limitation, taking into account the language, concepts and level of perception of the period in which people lived. For this reason, the conception of God in revelation is not a narrative in which God directly conveys Himself in absolute form, but a level of representation that appeals to human comprehension. God does not describe Himself from His absolute point of view, but from the limited point of view of human beings, because the consciousness addressed is that of human beings. This reveals that although the basic principles are contained in revelation, new epistemological conceptions can be developed by the people of each age.

Context of Criticism: Superficial Approaches to the Understanding of God

Atheist and agnostic critics usually target only one of these conceptions, namely the classical theistic conception of God. In this conception, God is seen as omnipotent, omniscient and sovereign. However, criticizing this conception on its own, in isolation from the rest of the system's core concepts such as free will, test, hereafter and justice, leads to a major contextual error. The conception of God gains meaning when it is evaluated together with these concepts as a whole. Otherwise, criticism based solely on questions such as "*Why did God do this, why did He not create like this?*" reflects a reductionist and superficial approach that is detached from its context.

If counter-arguments are developed by focusing on the God of theism in an intellectual system, this should be evaluated not only against the conception of God, but also against the other fundamental principles on which this conception is based. This is because this system has a holistic structure within itself and the answers to the criticisms are also found in the other elements of this structure. However, atheist and agnostic criticisms often ignore this holistic framework and target only the understanding of God. This is a philosophical and irrational approach, since it is methodologically problematic to judge any intellectual model by detaching it from its constituent elements.

For example, when the argument of evil is brought up, the answer to the question "*Why does God allow evil?*" is given in the theistic system with the understanding of test, free will and the reward-punishment mechanism in the hereafter. However, focusing only on the question of evil without taking this systemic framework into account means ignoring the larger issue. When this holistic explanation is presented, many critics move away from a rational attitude and take the position of giving God advice: "*I wouldn't have created things like this*", "*I wouldn't have tested people*", "*I wouldn't have created evil to give rewards*", etc., and react

with emotional and speculative arguments. However, the issue here is the meaningfulness and consistency of this intellectual structure within itself. It is possible not to believe in this model, not to accept it, but it is not a philosophical attitude to try to tear it apart with hysterical approaches from the outside, instead of dealing with its own internal logic.

Atheist and agnostic arguments often deviate from a rational ground and tend to philosophize with emotions. This approach breaks the rational holistic model into parts and then acts as if the whole does not exist. Moreover, by giving God reason, they imply that they can devise an alternative scenario of existence. But this approach is logically both weak and meaningless. For God could theoretically construct an infinite number of different universes, but this is how He created this universe, and it can be evaluated on the basis of what is. To generate criticism based on the speculative possibility of infinite possibilities is not a rational method and has no philosophical validity.

An Epistemological Paradox: Telling God “How You Should Have Created”

At this point, another common mistake atheists and agnostics make is to try to give God reason.² Statements such as “*God could have created like this, or He could have done like that*” are baseless assertions that are not binding in terms of rational thought, even though on the surface they appear to be discussions of infinite possibilities. Because when it comes to God, theoretically the possibilities are infinite. However, this does not mean that any possibility can constitute a legitimate ground for criticism. The distinction between “*the situation*” and “*should be*”, which is one of the fundamental principles of philosophical thought, gains importance here. This distinction applies especially to changeable phenomena: Social injustice, bad legislation or moral corruption are criticized because they can be shaped and transformed into something better by human action. For example, if there is discrimination against women in a society, this is criticized on both moral and legal grounds, and the construction of what should be - *that is, equality* - is advocated. This position is philosophically and morally consistent.

However, this approach is not valid in ontologically fixed and unchangeable areas such as God's essence and the act of creation. Discussing how God should create is like saying to a mathematical constant, “*Why is it defined this way, couldn't it be otherwise?*” This is not only an approach that distorts meaning, but also a violation of epistemological boundaries. Because man is not God; he cannot have a comprehensive cognition of God's absolute knowledge, purposes and power. Since man has a limited field of consciousness and experience, when he tries to offer alternatives to God's creation choices, he actually constructs even those alternatives through the existing structure created by God. This is a contradiction in the ontological sense: For a being who has never experienced a universe other than the current one to say that “*a better universe would be like this*” is nothing more than a baseless claim.

Moreover, such criticism usually reflects an emotional reaction rather than an intellectual inquiry. Statements such as “*If I were God, I wouldn't do this*” or “*I wouldn't test*

² For more detailed information on the subject, see. Emrah Bozkurt, “The Logical Impasse of Atheist and Agnostic Discourses”, *academia.edu*, Kusadasi 2025.

people” are not philosophical arguments, but expressions of personal displeasure with God. At this point rationality gives way to hysterical arrogance. Because ignoring God's absolute freedom and trying to limit Him with one's own human values and expectations is as irrational as the desire to replace God. Moreover, these criticisms are made by using the intellect and freedom that God has given to human beings - *that is, the ability to criticize* - without even realizing that God is the source of this ability. This is another dimension of contradiction.

Consequently, presenting God with alternative models of the universe or thinking that He could have constructed the order of creation “*better*” is a psychological outburst of anger rather than a philosophical criticism. This attitude is not the reflection of a mind that seeks to understand reality, but of a self that seeks to shape reality according to itself. Philosophical thought, on the other hand, seeks to understand and explain what exists, and approaches the absolutes that it cannot change not with arrogance but with intellectual humility.

Teaching the Programmer in the Programmer's Universe: A Tragicomic Critique

To understand this better, a software metaphor is quite illustrative. Consider a game programmer: This programmer has created a game universe in which he or she has set the rules, designed the characters and structured the mechanics from start to finish. This universe is a complex and complete system that includes physical boundaries, mechanics, tasks, and even the potential behavior of the characters. However, one of the characters within this universe - *forgetting that he is only an artificial being, a snippet of code* - begins to question this system from his own limited experience and perspective: “*Why did the programmer design such a universe? This world could be fairer, more fun, more meaningful. If I were the programmer, I would have created a much better universe.*”

The situation here is ironic because the character making this criticism is trying to intervene in the programmer's system, which is the source of even his own existence, from the inside and with a limited consciousness, as if he were on the outside. This is similar to a cartoon character attempting to lecture a screenwriter. But even more interestingly, the spark of consciousness and the ability to criticize that makes it possible for this character to think this way is itself the result of a space of freedom granted to him by the programmer. The character is not a predetermined puppet, but has the potential to make free choices within certain limits. But he uses this freedom not for self-realization, but to advise the absolute architect of the system.

This is where the absurd begins: A being created out of code puts itself outside the software and tries to judge and even correct the entire system. This being thinks that he is envisioning a “*better universe*” based on his own limited experience, even though he knows of no other structure of being or form of reality outside the universe. While this arrogant attitude may seem like a criticism against God, it is actually a reflection of his overconfidence in his own limited self. The character puts himself in God's place, but in doing so he is still acting within God's system, with the mind God gave him, and within the rules God set. This is not philosophical, but ironic.

Moreover, such attitudes are often fueled not by healthy intellectual inquiry but by repressed anger, emotional frustration or existential dissatisfaction. These characters, who seek

satisfaction by blaming the programmer instead of finding direction within the game universe, are not really philosophizing; on the contrary, they embellish their anger with ideas. This is a psychological defense mechanism. The domain of philosophy is to try to grasp the meaning and order inside, knowing that you cannot get outside the system. Some characters, however, not only fall outside of logic by trying to judge the outside from the inside, but also exaggerate their own position and assume the role of God. This is not a philosophical attitude; it is hysterical, absurd and tragicomic.

The Human Conception of God: A Deityless Critique of the Unconscious

There is an underlying psychological background to all these debates that is often unspoken: Atheist and agnostic minds liken God - *without realizing it* - to a human being. This subconscious projection leads to the expectation that God should be emotional, angry, vindictive or act with a sense of justice, just like a human being. The background to this is that throughout history God has always been modeled according to human conceptions. Many narratives about God have been limited to the cultural and intellectual conditions of the time, and since the most powerful depiction is that of the king, God has been imagined as a being "*more powerful than the king*". Therefore, the presentation of God as a being surrounded by angels and armies is in fact the result of a symbolic transfer that is in line with the meaning-making capacity of the people of the period. Since the abstract reality of God's closeness by the jugular vein was incomprehensible to historical man, even this closeness was concretized through intermediary beings such as angels. However, these do not reflect the reality of God, but the historical forms of the attempt to make sense of God. As a matter of fact, this situation shows that God cannot be put into a certain mold, and that people in every period have shaped God with their own level of knowledge and conceptual equipment.

Today, this mental inheritance is still in effect; many individuals who reject God are in fact rebelling not against the idea of an abstract, transcendent and holistic God, but against the figure of a "*superhuman*" or a "*humanoid alien*" they have subconsciously created. Outbursts such as "*Even I, as a human being, react to this suffering, why doesn't God intervene?*" are the result of this humanized model of God. God is not a being who acts on our desires, reactions or feelings. He is a being who knows the potential nature of everything and has established the system in its entirety. The order of being and creation is driven by functional and purposeful principles, not by emotional reactions. It is clear that God has established an order based on basic system elements such as free will, self-evolution and the afterlife. However, this order can be grasped from a holistic perspective. The atheistic and agnostic mind often evaluates this systematic system by taking it apart and approaches it with emotional reactions rather than rational ones. Therefore, it expects immediate emotional interventions from God, whereas the system postpones these interventions, allowing space for human freedom and giving the final answer in the hereafter. At this point a contradiction arises: While it is accepted in the discourse that God is a being completely different from man, critics accuse him of not acting like a human being. This contradiction shows that the conception of God is shaped through human forms and that the criticisms are based on this faulty foundation. In fact, the atheist and agnostic mind rebels not against God, but against the humanoid model of God that it has subconsciously

created. In this model, God is a kind of “*superhuman*” and every behavior that humans dislike is attributed to God and considered as a reason to object to his existence.

Understanding God is a Matter of Integrity: Thought Demands Seriousness

Islam's understanding of God, on the other hand, offers a much more holistic and systematic framework than these criticisms. In this understanding, the conception of God gains meaning only in the context of concepts such as free will, responsibility, test, justice and the hereafter. In other words, to present God as a being who only punishes or does not intervene would be to distort the logic of this holistic structure. This is because the structure we are dealing with here is an intellectual model that has its own internal coherence and can only be understood when evaluated as a whole. Even those who criticize this model must do so with a holistic approach; isolating the parts from their context is not rational but superficial.

However, many atheists and agnostics seek emotional satisfaction in their criticisms of this structure rather than rational integrity. For them, the issue is often not the intellectual coherence of the system, but the dissatisfaction they experience in their own inner worlds. They expect God to react emotionally as they do, and when this expectation is not met, they turn to rhetorical games and sophistry. This is not philosophy; it is an emotional defense, a disguising of subconsciously repressed psychological tensions as thought.

Moreover, these people often make the mistake of identifying the intellectual structure offered by religion with the wrongdoings of individuals who believe in that religion. Religious people are human beings; they may have shortcomings, contradictions and self-interested attitudes. Such individual deviations do not bind the revelation-based system itself; to equate sociopolitical deviations with a philosophical system is an epistemological error, a distortion. Unfortunately, it is incompatible with intellectual seriousness to try to produce arguments on such issues with a mindset that has not yet grasped this distinction. This is not an indication of an approach that attaches importance to thought, but of an intellectual laziness that does not pay attention to thinking and stays on the surface.

Conclusion

The main thesis of this article is that the fundamental mistake that atheists and agnostics often make in their criticism of God is that they subconsciously model God as a “*superhuman*”. To think of God as a sentient, decision-making and punishing being who must act according to human expectations is to reduce the reality of God, an ontological being, to the level of an epistemological representation. God is neither the universe itself nor a structure limited by universal laws. God is a transcendent and absolute being that transcends the limits of human cognition. Therefore, statements such as “*Why didn't God do this?*” or “*God should have done that*” are essentially criticisms of people's own mental designs, not of God.

Atheist and agnostic thought often takes an emotional rather than a philosophical stance when criticizing the theistic conception of God; it produces reductionist and context-free arguments by excluding complementary elements of the system such as free will, test, and

afterlife. In fact, they often drift away from the grounds of a rational discussion, and drift into speculative positions such as giving reason to God and writing alternative universe scenarios. However, philosophical coherence requires evaluating a belief system within its internal integrity. Criticizing the system by tearing its parts apart carries neither intellectual seriousness nor rational depth.

It is an epistemological contradiction to say to God "*how could you have created*" because the subject who makes this claim is already speaking with a limited cognition. To direct a power with infinite possibilities with a finite intellect is in itself meaningless. For this reason, the criticisms of God in atheist and agnostic thought are often a reflection of a "*superhuman*" fallacy. Modeling God as a human being and then attacking this model is not a rational criticism, but the self-destruction of a mental projection.