

Does God ('Perfect Being' God) Exist?

'Belief' is an affirmation of that which is judged to be probably the case.

It is an attitude (**'propositional attitude'**) of assent to a proposition that is held to be probably true.

- If one "believes P," one holds that it is more-probable-than-not that P is the case.

(= If one believes "that P," one holds that it is more-probable-than-not that "P is true.")

- If one believes that "God exists," one holds that it is more-probable-than-not that "God exists" is true.
- If one believes that "God does not exist," one holds that it is more-probable-than-not that "God does not exist" is true.

Probability is judged with regard to 'evidence' and is established by having **"sufficient evidence"** for P.

(But one may affirm / give assent to P on the basis of some other 'propositional attitude' than belief, = 'hope' - as we shall see.)

Options:

1. **'Theism'** = "I believe: 'God exists.'"

2. **'Atheism'** = "I believe: 'God does NOT exist'."

Notice that the atheist makes a claim / has a belief for which the atheist believes that s/he has sufficient evidence. The atheist is as obligated as the theist to give reasons / evidence for their belief that God does not exist.

3. **'Skepticism'** ('Agnosticism') = "I DO NOT believe: 'God exists'"

AND

"I DO NOT believe: God does NOT exist'."

The skeptic holds that there is insufficient evidence to justify a belief either way.

Thus, they fail to have a belief regarding either the existence of God or the non-existence of God.

(*Failing to have a belief* that P is the case is not the same as *having a belief* that P is not the case)

Typically, the skeptic has asserted that one must 'suspend (all?) judgment' regarding the existence of God, as there is insufficient evidence to justify belief in God. One must *live without a belief* in God and this has typically and practically meant *living as-if* there is no God.

But **hope** is also a propositional attitude. One may have a hope regarding that which is possible, though not probable. If one desires that P be the case, even though the evidence for P is insufficient to establish that it is more-probable-than-not that P, there may still be sufficient evidence to establish that it is “significantly possible” that P. Thus, one may *hope, rather than believe*, that P.

One who hopes that God exists recognizes that there are good reasons not to believe in God and that the evidence is insufficient to justify a belief that God exists. But there are some good reasons / evidence to support the claim that God does exist. One may desire that God exist for a variety of reasons and motives. *Why must such a one live as-if there is no God?* Why must they suspend all judgment and not make any kind of affirmation that God exists?

The answer is that one who desires that God exist and who desires to “have faith” in God, one who recognizes that (based upon the evidence) it is a significant possibility that God exists – such a person is within their personal and epistemic rights to hope-affirm that God exists and to live as-if God does exist. That person has the right to choose to affirm the existence of God and live as-if God does exist, based upon hope-affirmation. And this may be called “faith.”

Thus, there are two types of skepticism:

3A. Skeptical Non-Theism = One maintains a skeptical attitude toward the issue of God’s existence, has no belief either that God does or does not exist, and lives ‘as-if’ God does not exist.

3B. Skeptical Theism = One does not have a belief that God exists (as they recognize it cannot be said that it is more-probable-than-not that God exists), but one hopes that God exists as it is possible (based upon the evidence) that God exists. One affirms the existence of God based upon the propositional attitude of hope and one lives “as-if” God exists based upon a hope-affirmation.