

Atheism's Logical Certainty

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At the point of death, a human being only has had the experience of nonexistence before birth and the experience of having lived his/her life after they were born. In the final analysis from the perspective of strict empiricism, the individual only has two options: the nonexistence before birth or the eventual reliving of one's life. The return of one's life is supported by the paradigm of a multiverse and an antimatter universe. This is atheism's logical certainty.

Keywords: Pascal's wager, strict empiricism of Cartesian doubt, eternal recurrence, multiverse, antimatter universe, death, nonexistence before birth equals nonexistence after death, the body, the flesh

An Advance in the History of Western Philosophy

This article contains a "new landmark" in the history of western philosophy: namely, viewed from the existing individual of flesh and blood and within the context of Pascal's wager and then applied to the strict empiricism of Descartes' Cartesian doubt, the existential individual confronted with death only has two logical choices: broken bits of eternity (nonexistence) or his/her eternal return. Of course, the individual might refuse to choose an option; nevertheless, the choices are for the concrete-existing individual facing death, based on his/her concrete experience—that is the experience of nonexistence before birth or the experience of one's lived life—there are only two logical possibilities and they are: his/her nonexistence or eternal recurrence; in other words, broken bits of eternity or reliving one's life.

Cartesian doubt strives to accept as true only that which cannot possibly be doubted. Our experience of nonexistence before birth (like a deep sleep) and our experience of living our life cannot be doubted. Within the life of the existing/dying individual, "I think; therefore, I am" or "Cogito ergo sum", viewed within the context of Pascal's wager, logically "flows" into the eternal return.

Pascal's (1623-1662) wager, or argument for believing in God, goes something like this: wager that God exists because if you lose, you lose nothing and if you win, you win everything (Hoeffe, 2001, p. 163). However, this argument implicitly assumes that God is not intellectually respectable because if God were intellectually respectable, he would punish us for believing in Him on insufficient evidence and reward us for not believing (P. Burkholder, Fall Quarter 1965, class notes, *Introduction to Philosophy*, Central Washington University).

A twist in Pascal's argument leads us to atheism's first logical certainty. We all want some type of certainty or predictability in our lives. In our lives it is predictable that death will end our lives: it's a forgone conclusion that we shall at some point die. To counter the sting of death and console the nonbeliever, a paradigm or cosmology of multiple universes—a multiverse—is asserted. Such a cosmology supports a conception of eternity

for the atheist, an eternity based on science, as part of the process to mitigate the sting of death. Atheism's logical certainty gives us the choice of nonexistence or an eternal return.

I Think; Therefore, I Am

Descartes (1596-1650) broke from the past by not trusting the authority of any previous philosophy. "The fundamental aim was to attain philosophical truth by the use of reason" (Copleston, 1960, p. 66). "Descartes begins by explaining the method of 'Cartesian doubt'," as it has come to be called. In order to have a firm basis for his philosophy, he resolves to make himself doubt everything that he can manage to doubt. ... He begins with skepticism in regard to the senses.

Can I doubt, he says, that I am sitting here by the fire in a dressing-gown? Yes, for sometimes I have dreamt that I was here when in fact I was naked in bed. (Pajamas, and even nightshirts, had not been invented.) Moreover, madmen sometimes have hallucinations, so it is possible that I may be in like case. (Russell, 1972, p. 563)

There remains, however, something that I cannot doubt: no demon, however cunning could deceive me if I did not exist. I may have no body: this might be an illusion. But thought is different. "While I wanted to think everything false, it must necessarily be that I who thought was something; and remarking that this truth, I think, therefore; I am, was so solid and so certain that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were incapable of upsetting it. I judged that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy that I sought."

This passage is the kernel of Descartes theory of knowledge, and contains what is most important in his philosophy...Modern philosophy has very largely accepted the formulation of its problems from Descartes, while not accepting his solutions.

The reader will remember that Saint Augustine advanced an argument closely similar to the "cogito." He did not, however, give prominence to it, and the problem which it is intended to solve occupied only a small part of his thoughts. Descartes' originality, therefore, should be admitted, though it consists less in inventing the argument than in perceiving its importance. (Russell, 1972, p. 564)

The importance of "I think, therefore, I am" or "Cogito ergo sum" cannot be overestimated because it provides a solid foundation for our philosophy. This is the case because without doubt, I know—I'm absolutely certain—that I exist. For example, when I have a toothache, I cannot doubt the pain. And when I feel intense pain, I become consumed by it. Although I might be dreaming or a thought in the mind of God, nevertheless, "it hurts"; therefore, I know that I, in some sense, exist. The "hurting" from intense pain I cannot doubt; therefore, I cannot doubt my existence, I cannot doubt my consciousness, my awareness.

But the only thing I know for sure is that I exist. In addition, Cartesian doubt is in agreement with Camus that to know "...what is," it must be understandable, comprehensible. "We do not want to found anything on the incomprehensible. ... We want to remain in the...path where the intelligence can remain clear. If that is pride, we see no sufficient reason for giving it up" (Camus, 1991, p. 40). Therefore, all we know is, "Cogito ergo sum".

My Body

My existence, my awareness or consciousness is the first phenomenon that cannot be doubted, it's my first certainty. My consciousness exists; that has been proven. However, how do I know my body exists?

Well, there's one thing I know about my body: I know my body will die. The great German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, wrote, "Niemand zweifelt daran, dass man stirbt" (Heidegger, 1979, p. 255). "Nobody doubts that one dies" (Author's translation). (If you are in a group of people, the one thing they know for certain about each other is that they are all going to die sooner or later.) But for the human body to die, it must first exist.

Because all human bodies eventually die, in order to die, they must first exist: something that does not exist cannot die and according to Heidegger, death is real (Heidegger, 1979, p. 250). And nobody doubts that one dies, "Niemand zweifelt daran, dass man stirbt" (Heidegger, 1979, p. 255). Because no sane person doubts the eventual death of the human body, the criterion of Cartesian doubt is fulfilled. (To imagine the body not dying, to doubt the death of the body, is a fairy tale because "all things flow.") Therefore, according to the criteria of Cartesian doubt, we have two certainties; two realities: my awareness/consciousness and my body; both are real; both exist. But what is the connection between them?

The Flesh

The mind and body are connected through the flesh or rather it's through the flesh that they are one. For example, if I take a knife and cut deeply into the flesh of my body, my awareness feels pain. The flesh perceives and is perceived (Douglas & Johnson, 1977, p. 126). My fist is both a subject and an object because the flesh is both subject and object. It's through my flesh that I feel my toothache, which convinces me of my existence. It's through the flesh, of which my brain consists, that I know I exist, that causes the consciousness of my existence.

The flesh...is the sensible sentient, the exemplar sensible. It is that which is both seer and seen, that which touches and which is touched. The body as the self-awareness of an "I am able to" provides the intersection between the perceiving and the perceived. My carnal being forms the anchorage of my world...The flesh...is the sensible thing that senses. (Douglas & Johnson, 1977, p. 126)

My carnal being, my "brute being", is from the flesh and is my anchor in the world. My flesh, my body, my aches and pains, tell my awareness/consciousness that the body is real, that I exist. And when the body is dying, it must exist in order to be dying. My body must exist before it can die. (Therefore, in death we face the ultimate authenticity of selfhood.) Stated more exactly, my flesh is dying, so it must be existing in order to be dying. Therefore, we have two certainties or two indubitable realities: my existence and the death of my body. Thus, "I think; therefore, I am" becomes "My body is aware; therefore, it must die." But what is death? Once again, our only experience of nonexistence is our before-birth-nonexistence. And our only experience of existence is the life we have lived.

Supporting Assumption

What is the nature of our experience of nonexistence after death? Our first experience of nonexistence was before birth and there is no reason not to assume that the after-death experience of nonexistence is not the same: nonexistence equals nonexistence; before-birth experience of nonexistence equals after-death experience of nonexistence. Before my birth, I did not exist; after my death, I shall not exist; therefore, experience of nonexistence before birth equates with that after death. This is an assumption which assumes that the experience of nonexistence before birth equals the experience of nonexistence after death because there is no logical reason the experience of nonexistence is not the same. And the only credible conception/description of the after-death experience of nonexistence is the before-birth experience of nonexistence. The only comprehensible view of after-death experience of nonexistence is my before-birth experience of nonexistence.

The Metaphysical Basis of Atheism Is Its Logical Certainty of Eternal Recurrence

But when my flesh, my body dies, what happens to my awareness/consciousness? Remember, we have only two absolute certainties, only two things we cannot doubt. The first is “I exist” and the second is “I shall die.” And we have a third assumption that before-birth experience equates with after-death experience. Nevertheless, when my body dies, must my consciousness or awareness also die? The major religions of the world will not help us because they all have an afterlife, or heaven, that is incomprehensible.

Thus, if we wish to remain true to Cartesian doubt and strict empiricism—the life experience of the concrete-existing individual—we have the before-birth experience of nonexistence—which equates with the after-death experience of nonexistence—and the experience of “this life”, my current life. Thus, logically there are only two eternities open to our awareness. The first eternity is nonexistence with “death as the end of all things” and the second eternity is that, at some point, I shall again relive my life, my very same life, my very same awareness. (However, I cannot remember a past life/awareness; otherwise, it would not be the same awareness because it would have the new property of being remembered.) To reiterate, from the standpoint of strict/radical empiricism, at the point of death I only have two logical alternatives: either I shall return to my before-birth experience of nonexistence or I shall eventually live my life again because logically there are no other options. There are no other options because I have solely experienced my nonexistence before my birth and the experience of my existence after my birth. To be absolutely clear: in other words, when facing death, every human being has only had the experience of nonexistence before his/her birth and the experience of his/her existential existence (life) after his/her birth. Therefore, when facing death and in choosing an eternity, empirically he/she only has the choice of before-birth nonexistence or the choice of eventual after-birth existence. To reiterate, at the point of death, a human being only has the choice of the nonexistence before his/her birth or the choice of the existence after his/her birth.

Of the two options or choices, “broken bits of eternity” or an “eventual return” of my present life, I wager on my life’s eventual return: if I win, then I win everything; if I lose, then I lose nothing and at least I’ll have had the comfort of believing that “death is not the end of all things”.

The Eternal Return

The doctrine of eternal recurrence says I’ll live my life—the very same life—over and over again eternally. “Everything returns, including everything evil, miserable, and vile” (Nietzsche, 1954, p. 174). However, those moments which took your breath away also return. And I’ve found that people happily, passionately, deeply, are in love like the idea of a repetition of that romantic experience. This is the doctrine of eternal recurrence or the eternal return. As you read these lines, you have read them many times in the past and will read them again in the future. When I repeat my existence, I’ll be born again in 1944 but I shall not remember my past life; otherwise, it would not be the very same life because it would have the new property of being remembered. In fact, my present life may have been lived many times in the past and shall continue to be relived in the future.

To reiterate, I exist and I shall die. (More exactly: my body exists and it shall die.) The next question is: what about my awareness, my consciousness? Must it also die? Logically, there are only two kinds of eternity available because the Christian version of heaven of sitting on a fluffy white cloud, or the Hindu doctrine of

reincarnation, or the Moslem conception of a lust garden are all incomprehensible. They are incomprehensible because the only things I know for sure are my existence and death. The death of my body entails only two logical options for my awareness: either it dies forever or eventually it returns.

To summarize: Descartes' Cartesian doubt leads to his existence as his only certainty. When "I think; therefore, I am" "stands next to death", Cartesian doubt becomes boxed into two choices: either my existence (awareness, consciousness) ends forever or eventually returns. Thus, Descartes' systematic doubt, like a logical proof, logically leads to eternal death or the eternal return. I'm certain of only my awareness, of my consciousness, and of my pending death; therefore, at the point of death I have only two logical possibilities: my awareness ends forever or it will return. Thus, the logical/deductive consequences of "cogito ergo sum" are eternal death or an eternal repetition of life. Once the self stands all alone, when it dies, it dies forever or forever returns. And this is the hidden logical certainty in the philosophy of atheism, that Descartes systematic doubt logically entails "death as the end of all things" or "the eternal return". But if death is the "end of all things", then "eternity is as one night". And based on the abundant scientific evidence supporting the multiverse (Altheide, 2020, p. 42) & the eternal return as its logical consequence, I wager on eternal recurrence: as previously stated, if I win, I win everything and if I lose, I lose nothing. But at least I shall have had the "comfort of believing that death is not the end of all things".

Multiple Universes

Multiple universes are a scientific foundation for the reality of the eternal return. What we call the cosmos or universe might be a small entity in a vast cosmological expanse, merely one of many universes scattered across a cosmological archipelago (Greene, 2011).

The multiverse might not be so weird after all because it is not a new idea. The early Greek philosopher, Anaximander (about 546 B.C.), did not think that our universe is the only universe but "... thought our world only one of many" (Russell, 1972, p. 27). Regarding the strangeness of a multiverse, Neil Tyson wrote that our universe:

...could be just one of an infinite assortment of universes that comprise the multiverse. Sounds exotic and unbelievable. But is it any crazier than the first suggestions that Earth orbits the Sun? That the Sun is one of a hundred billion stars in the Milky Way? Or that the Milky Way is but one of a hundred billion galaxies in the universe? (Tyson, 2017, p. 89)

But where is the support for such an idea as multiple universes?

Support for the multiverse, the hypothesis that our universe is not the only universe but is one of many, comes from developments in physics. In science, the multiverse is the only explanation for the "big bang". Regarding the multiverse, Professor Susskind said, "It's a hypothesis; there is no other hypothesis" for the big bang (Fabric of the Cosmos, 2011, NOVA, DVD, PBS, Disc 4).

When scientists:

...diligently follow the trail these theories blaze, scientists have run smack into one potential multiverse after another. Take a trip along a great many of the traveled scientific highways...and you'll encounter a diverse assortment of multiverse candidates. They're harder to avoid than they are to find. (Greene, 2011, p. 357)

Now the mathematical equations in inflationary cosmology (the bang in the big bang), predict a multiverse. The multiverse is supported by a three-legged stool: the theory of inflation, the measurement of negative gravity,

and the multiple dimensions of string theory. Per Professor Susskind, “Scientists follow the logic and the logic seems to lead to a multiverse” (Fabric of the Cosmos, 2011, NOVA, DVD, Disc 4). Furthermore, after some refinements in string theory had been developed,

...researches realized that the math suggested plainly that our universe might belong to a multiverse. In fact, the mathematics of string theory suggested not just one but a number of different kinds of multiverses of which we might be a part. (Greene, 2011, p. 86)

In addition, it appears that various developments in physics converge on a multiverse.

I find it both curious and compelling that numerous developments in physics, if followed sufficiently far, bump into some variation on the parallel-universe theme. It's not that physicists are standing ready, multiverse nets in their hands, seeking to snare any passing theory that might be slotted, however awkwardly, into a parallel-universe paradigm. Rather, all of the parallel-universe proposals that we...take seriously emerge unbidden from the mathematics of theories developed to explain conventional data and observations. (Greene, 2011, p. 9)

And parallel-universes also seem to flow out of the mathematics of inflationary theory.

Inflation has become a fixture of cosmological investigation. ... In many versions of inflationary theory, the burst of spatial expansion is not a onetime event. Instead, the process by which our region of the universe formed—rapid stretching of space, followed by a transition to a more ordinary, slower expansion, together with the production of particles—may happen over and over again at various far-flung locations throughout the cosmos. (Greene, 2011, p. 63)

Furthermore, on the other side of a black hole, there might be another universe (Black Hole Apocalypse, 2018, NOVA, DVD). Black holes in our universe are becoming more numerous (Black Hole Apocalypse, 2018, NOVA, DVD). Thus, all the black holes in our universe point to multiple universes. These other universes create their own big bangs and we have an endless number of big bangs.

Therefore, the “bottom line” is that the paradigm of multiple universes as crazy as it sounds is a solid scientific idea (Vilenkin, 2001).

Martin Rees, the United Kingdom's Astronomer Royal, sees the multiverse as the natural next step in our deepening grasp of all there is. Leonard Susskind says those who ignore the possibility that we're part of a multiverse are merely averting their eyes from a vision they find overwhelming. (Greene, 2011, p. 188)

The “Anti-universe”

Eternal recurrence is supported by the anti-universe. (Remember that quantum mechanics is stranger than fiction: a particle can be in two places at once, go backward in time, and etc. (Greene, 1999)). The following article is quoted from Caroline Delbert, April 21, 2022.

Scientists believe there could be an “anti-universe” somewhere out there that looks like the mirror of our own universe, reciprocating almost everything we do. If this theory holds true, it could explain the presence of dark matter.

First, some background: the “Big Bang” is a collective term that includes a variety of theories studied by cosmologists, the scientists who try to rewind the clock as close to the very beginning of the universe as possible. Most agree that matter exploded forth, but there are different opinions on, for example, whether the temperature was extremely hot or absolute-zero cold at that initial moment.

There are also disagreements about what may have happened prior to the bang itself. Could it be that what we call the Big Bang was the inflection point of an even bigger bounce in progress? Think of the point when you bounce on the trampoline and your feet almost touch the ground beneath—then imagine only seeing the subsequent bounce upward; it's meaningless without the first, downward half of the bounce!

Dark matter is, is such a thing exists, maybe even more perplexing to scientists than the big Bang. That's because dark matter is a key piece that helps to complete an unclear puzzle—the question of what forms the universe around us today, not billions of years ago. Dark matter forms the bulk of the matter in the universe, but we've never been able to see it anywhere.

One way to describe dark matter is very literal: by “dark,” we mean that it is not luminous, which is the technical term for matter that doesn't reflect or emit any photons in a way we can identify. But we can measure the physical (not visual) effect of dark matter in things like gravitational waves.

Now we arrive back at the new theory. Could it be that a newly discovered “anti-universe” might run parallel to our own universe, but backward in time? If so, it would essentially spread out “backward” in time, prior to the Big Bang, in the same way our universe progressed “forward” in time. ... The Big Bang might have been smaller and more symmetrical than we think.

A remarkable consequence of this hypothesis is a new explanation for the cosmological dark matter.

This model of the Big Bang removes the need for what scientists call “inflation,” a period in which the universe massively expanded in order to account for its size soon after birth. Instead, the matter could have naturally expanded over time in a less forceful way, which could simplify our explanation for what happened.

And in order for these two before-and-after universes to be truly symmetrical, we would need to add a particle to our existing understanding of the universe around us. Today, we know about neutrinos, extra-tiny mysterious particles involved in gravity and weak interaction only. If our universe is mirrored by a similar universe running backward in time from Big Bang, then what we call dark matter could actually be a version of a neutrino that is “right-handed,” a term that refers to the direction of motion in the neutrino. It would be the natural opposite of the left-handed neutrinos in the other universe. (Delbert, 2022)

Conclusion

In the “anti-matter universe”, which mirrors our universe but runs backward from it, I have already lived my future life. And therefore, when in our “positive-matter universe” I live out the end of my life and approach death, I shall be living it a second time. And in the “anti-matter universe” I shall relive my childhood. This is support for the doctrine of the eternal return.

When I am dying, I shall only have had the experience of my nonexistence before my birth and after my birth, the experience of living my life. And ultimately these two experiences are my sole empirical experiences; therefore, they are the only ones I cannot doubt. Hence, according to Cartesian logic, at the point of death and facing eternity, I only have the option of eternal nonexistence before my birth or that of eternal existential existence after my birth. Although life is a cross, something mankind must carry, I choose to eternally relive my actual existence.

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