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A sower of discord- God, Atheism and the Argument from Doxastic Discord

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explore the pressing and perennial ontological question of the existence of God. In so doing, I set out to develop a (somewhat) novel deductively valid argument against the existence of God, more particularly, the type of God that is thought to constitute the common metaphysical and theological capital of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The argument, known as the **Argument from Doxastic Discord**, is an affirmative argument for Atheism and seeks to demonstrate that there is an explicit logical contradiction between (i) the observable empirical fact of doxastic heterogeneity amongst finite persons on the one hand, and (ii) the classic 'great-making' properties usually ascribed to God on the other. It will be argued that the empirical existence of doxastic heterogeneity (of a particular kind) cannot be logically reconciled with a perfect supernatural being that is supposed to simultaneously co-instantiate the properties of *omnipotence*, *omniscience* and *omni-benevolence* and who desires to have a deep, long lasting and meaningful relationship with all human persons.

I intend to divide the discussion into three broad sections. In the first section, I articulate the general landscape in which this discussion is taking place by first clearly explicating the core concerns that lie behind, and motivate, the **Argument from Doxastic Discord**. In so doing, it will be necessary to disambiguate two concerns viz. the e*pistemic* and *metaphysical* concerns. Of the two concerns, it will be the latter that will form the principal subject matter of this thesis.

It will also be necessary to explicate and distinguish the crucial concepts of 'God', 'Theism', 'Atheism', 'Ultimism' and 'Belief' as well as outline the inter-relationships between these concepts. Part of this exercise will involve distinguishing personal and impersonal conceptions of God as well as articulating what we really mean when we speak of the so called 'great making' properties of omnipotence, omniscience and omni-benevolence i.e. the properties of realist cataphatic 'perfect being' theology.

In the second section I set out the positive argument - **the Argument from Doxastic Discord**. The argument itself is divided into two parts. The first part of the argument contains just two premises - one *theological* and the other *empirical* – as well as the main conclusion. The second part of the argument is an extended sub-argument justifying the theological premise. In this section I, therefore, explain and unpack the content of both the theological premise and the empirical premise, as well as present the *prima facie* case for the crucial premises constituting the sub-argument.

Finally, in the third section I set out the principal objections that might be made by a theist to both the theological and empirical premises of the first part of the argument. In particular, the focus shall be on articulating the most promising theistic response to the crucial premises in the sub-argument and why, in the final analysis such responses are, to my mind, unpersuasive. In conclusion, I hope to persuade the reflective reader that the **Argument from Doxastic Discord** is a worthwhile affirmative argument for Atheism that can, and should, take its place in the atheistic armamentarium, alongside other prominent cognate atheological arguments such as the *Argument from Evil* and the *Argument from Divine Hiddenness*.