

IMPULSES IN THE LEGACY OF ATHEISM; A CRITIQUE OF ANTONY FLEW'S ATHEISTIC APPROACH

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***Abstract:** Atheism is considered a legacy of the new era. Hume is considered the beginning of this legacy. Despite his fifty years of atheism, Antony Flew has shaken the structure of this heritage by raising questions about the fragility of this approach and has spoken about the possibility of the existence of God. His questions regarding the questioning of the claimants of atheism cannot be considered only as violations or questions or the possibility of rejection. The impulse that he raised by asking about the possibility of the existence of God based on the foundations of science in the future era produced three results:*

First, creating a fundamental hole in Humists claims and atheism; Second, the possibility of re-examining the claims of atheism and re-reading the arguments of atheists and criticizing and evaluating them and the possibility of

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the violations and objections being unsubstantiated; Third, returning to the correct and accurate reading of the arguments of the theists in proving the existence of an intelligent principle in the creation of the world. The main idea of the present article is, firstly, the approach and first period of the view of Flew about the impossibility of positive proof of theism has been analyzed, then the three achievements of the theoretical impulses on the legacy of atheism have been explained and at the end his main thought in the second period of his thought is examined and analyzed.

Keywords: *atheism, proofs, theism of Antony Flew, legacy of atheism.*

Introduction

Antony Flew is one of the most famous atheists of the contemporary era in the last seventy years, who has spent most of his intellectual life defending and insisting on the position of atheism and its theoretical explanation. He believed that religious beliefs are not reasonable, the proofs of God's existence do not have the necessary ability to show the existence of an intelligent field, and it is not possible to prove the glory of the creation of the world with the help of proofs.

In addition, he insisted on this trend that there is a kind of incompatibility between the evil in the world and the existence of the merciful and omnipotent God (Smith, 2010, p.340). Flew's mental desire for new wisdom and positivist science of the problem of evil as a shelter of atheism and its incompatibility with the basic attributes of God (Peterson et al., 2007, p. 177/ Plantinga, 2006, p. 122) had an important effect on the formation of the idea of atheism in him (Flew, pp. 82-83).

Flew has compiled the article "Theology and Refutation" or "Acceptance or Refutation" against the theology and the meaning of religious propositions; However, Flew himself says that the purpose of theology and the falsification of the

comprehensive theory was not about the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of religious propositions but to create a clear discussion between positivists and theists and express the difference between belief and non-belief which its result was to challenge the believers for how to understand their statements (Flew, 2014, p. 111).

The novel aspect of this article is in explaining Flew's views after the epistemological break from the idea of atheism. The innovation of the article is that it evaluates Flew's encounter with other thinkers and examines the errors in the field of science and atheism. Today, scientific atheism has become a dominant trend even in fields of science. The present article provides a suitable basis for criticizing atheistic ideas, especially in the field of science (Pour 2022, pp. 208-210).

Is there no God?

Antony Flew tried to compile works in defense of atheism for half a century. In the field of atheistic humanism, he had a great impact on public opinion and gained great fame among experts and atheists. First by publishing a short book on theology and falsification, and then in the form of numerous books and articles such as the book of God and philosophy, Flew addressed the issue of atheism and defending his position and emphasized on the lack of sufficient evidence and rational reasons for the existence of God.

Flew's works and researches are more important in the field of theology and atheism, his works can be divided into two periods of thought, i.e. the period of atheism and emphasis on the approach of atheism, and the other period of probably theism from 2004 onwards. Among the works of the first period, there are three important works, the first is the controversial article on theology and falsification, which was presented and published in 1950. In this article, the problem of evil is raised and after connecting it with the meaningfulness of religious propositions, it examines the belief of the believers and challenges and criticizes them. The

beginning of this article is adapted from John Wisdom's article entitled "gods" (Sell, 1988).

The allegory of the garden and the gardener refers to the allegory of Wisdom and his perception of God and God's presence in the world. In order to explain the order in the world, Wisdom says that there are two theories about the world: either can a person say that this whole order is a coincidence, based on scientific explanations and based on the theory of evolution and correct selection, or one can say that this entire process of evolution of the world is under the guidance and supervision of a consciousness called God (Wisdom, 1944, pp.201- 205). From Flew's point of view, the parable of the Gardener shows that a person who believes in the existence of God, by adding various restrictions to his original ruling, the gardener deviates from his original ruling and cannot correctly prove the existence of God. After that, Flew states the meaningfulness of religious propositions among theists and says that the claim of theists that the evil in the world does not conflict with religious beliefs suffers from meaninglessness (Ibid, pp. 204-206).

The principle of loving God

The most important foundation of faithism, in addition to regarding the faith of humans as the base, is also God's love for his servants. Religious people respond to the problem of evil with the help of the principle of God's love. The atheists' answer to the problem of evil is not sufficient from Flew's point of view; Because in criticizing the arguments of atheists they emphasize that the principle of similarity between the actions of God and humans is incorrect and they believe that there is no incompatibility between the existence of evil in the world and the existence of God. In criticizing the views of the theists, Flew says that God should love His servants like a father to His son, and shower him with love and rush to his aid in times of pain and suffering, and open the door of light to him; While this is not the case; Because when a child suffers from a deadly disease and the heavenly father does not show any source of concern despite the earthly father's efforts to keep him alive, it means

that either there is no God or he does not love his children. Antony Flew says that theists, in response to this question and the ambiguities of God's love for man, justify the lack of similarity between loving God and human beings by the principle of loving, and follow the restrictions of dissimilarity. In fact, theists emphasize that God's love is not like earthly love; Therefore, the same rule should not be applied. In criticizing this point of view, Flew explains that, in fact, theists are looking for the compatibility of human suffering with loving of God and finally proving the existence of God despite the existence of evil (Hick, 1990, p.368).

Antony Flew says in a critical question against the answer of the believers, if the principle of God's love for humans is restricted, will there be anything left of loving? According to Flew's opinion, the existence of pain and suffering is a violation of God's love for man. Theists' answer from Flew's point of view may not deny anything, but it does not seek proof either (Flew, 2007, pp 44-43). In other words, the majority of the believers constantly make adjustments to explain why the all-good and all-powerful God allows suffering. Flew ends his speech with this question: What must happen to negate the love of God or the non-existence of God? (Stiver, 1996, p.48) According to Flew's argument, it is a meaningful statement that can be revoked in a certain situation; While from the point of view of theists, religious propositions cannot be refuted and are not false under any circumstances. Flew concludes that believing God, the principle of God's statement exist and the fundamental difference between loving God and humans cannot be meaningful (Ali Zamani 1375, p. 117).

The necessity of distinguishing between the existence of God and His attributes

The question of the possibility of God's existence is different from the question of attributes. Evil in the question of the opposites is directed at the attributes and not the existence of God. While Flew ignored this difference, he confused between the truth or falsity of God's existence and the meaning of God's attributes, and based on the view of similitude and incarnation in Christianity, he

equated the love of God with humanity. He was influenced by logical positivism regarding the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of religious propositions and his theory of falsifiability includes a limited view of meaningfulness (Plantinga and others, 2005). This is the reason why, with a misunderstanding, Flew has listed the theistic language as an expository language; in addition, Flew has not paid attention to the difference between the irrefutability of propositions in the position of explanation concerning the conditions affecting the entire human life. In other words, religious language may present a point of view that cannot be refuted; At the same time, it can be existentially important (Stiver, 1996, p.80). Crombie's answer in "*Faith and Logic*" to Flew's essay on "*theology and falsifiability*" is a different answer. Crombie says that theists believe in a mystery beyond experience while traces of it are found in experience. By analyzing Flew's question and others' answers, Crombie says that it can be shown that religious propositions are falsifiable and thus have meaning. Of course, according to his belief, such a cancellation is possible only in principle and not in practice (Sell, 1988. p. 152). Crombie first distinguished between the meaningfulness of God's existence and the meaningfulness of God's attributes and by referring to the special feature of religious propositions, he talks about the difference between its falsifiability and other empirical propositions.

Flew paid attention to Crombie's answers in the book "There is God" and says that from his point of view, we can only understand the correct meaning of religious propositions when we correctly understand three basic propositions. First of all, we must know that God is a transcendent being from the point of view of the theists, therefore, we cannot apply natural propositions similar to the current world for Him. Second, from the point of view of God's believers, it is beyond comprehension. Third, religious propositions as human perceptions of divine truths can be expressed in the form of parables (Flew, 2007, pp. 45-46).

The question of God's effectiveness

The book “God and Philosophy” was published in 1966, which is related to Antony Flew's reflections on opposition to theology. The important point is that in the last edition, i.e. 2005, Flew, by editing the introduction of this book, considered himself a natural and rational believer in God and explained that it is true that he does not believe in any revelation system, he sees in himself the readiness to accept them (Abdollahi, 2004, p. 294). In this important work of his atheism period, Flew deals with the issue of inconsistency in the concept of God.

From Flew's point of view, any research on the existence of God must start from examining the concept of God; Because there are questions about God, if they cannot be answered, it leads to inconsistency in the concept of God. He says that the first question is what is God's unique existence like? The second question is about the contradiction between positive and negative interpretations about God. His third question is the inconsistency between God's attributes and some undeniable truths, how can they be justified?

In explaining the questions, Antony Flew says that according to the belief of the theists, if God is effective and creative, then He must have an independent existence that can be referred to and we can recognize His existence. Now, if a believer in God claims that the existence of God is a unique being that cannot be spoken about, we will face the problem of the impossibility of knowledge and non-existence. In the explanation of the second question, he says, how can attributes that clearly have human characteristics be attributed to a non-physical and non-human God, and how can we believe in the cognitive semantic similarity of two completely different entities? In the third question, Flew says that when we attribute these attributes to God, we will face two problems, first, the problem of incompatibility of the concepts and themes of the attributes with each other, and second, the incompatibility of these attributes with some facts and reality of the outside world (Flew, 2014, p. 13-16).

In short, in the above mentioned discussion, Flew puts forward some views and criticisms. From his point of view, the example of the gardener shows that a person who believes in the existence of a gardener, by adding various restrictions to

his original principle, deviates from his original ruling and cannot correctly prove the existence of God. He believes that the claim of theists that the evil in the world does not conflict with religious beliefs suffers from meaninglessness and that it is a meaningful statement that can be revoked in certain situations.

The atheists' answer to the evil problem is unsatisfactory from Flew's point of view; Because in criticizing the arguments of atheists they emphasize that the principle of similarity between the actions of God and humans is incorrect and they believe that there is no incompatibility between the existence of evil in the world and the existence of God.

Flew believes that God should love His servants like a father to His child and give him love, and if He does not show concern during pain and suffering, it means that either God does not exist or He does not love his children.

In his opinion, the believers in response to God's love for man have tried to justify the lack of similarity between God and man.

Flew believes that if the principle of God's love for humans is attached to some limitations, will there be anything left of love?The existence of pain and suffering is a violation of God's love for man. He believes that the answer of the believers may not reject anything, but it does not include any proof (Pour-Hasan, 2022,pp. 355-354).

Four critiques; Principle of analogy

Before Flew, Hume had also turned to the principle of simile in criticizing the splendor of the world and teleological argument. Flew's analogy approach is subject to fundamental criticism instead of making an argument. In other words, the important issue is that in these problems, he ignores the fundamental difference between God's existence as a supreme Being and other existences as natural beings. Considering the meaning of existence in natural and material beings as principle, he has started to deny the existence of God. The second criticism is that he confused between the existence of God and the meaningfulness of His attributes and explained

his point of view based on the allegorical theology of Christianity. The third critique, which has more of a logical linguistic aspect, is that Flew was influenced by logical positivism regarding the meaninglessness of religious propositions, and with a misunderstanding of language of religion, he considered monotheistic language of religion as an expository language. The fourth criticism can be considered as a fundamental flaw in his intellectual foundation about falsifiability, which has not been paid much or any attention by researchers. The truth is that Antony Flew did not pay close attention to the problem of distinguishing the dual status, i.e. propositional aspect and form of life, and he did not pay attention to the difference between the irrefutability of propositions as an explanation, and the conditions that affect the entire human life. In other words, religious language may present a point of view that cannot be refuted; At the same time, it is existentially important.

According to Crombie's opinion, Flew does not have a correct understanding of the theory of “contradiction of religious propositions”, and he did not make a difference between its two types, i.e. contradiction in the subject and contradiction in the predicate. Crombie distinguishes between the meaningfulness of God's existence and the meaningfulness of His attributes, and considering the special characteristics of religious propositions, he discusses the difference between their falsifiability and other empirical propositions (*ibid.*, pp. 351-354).

God of the gaps and flaws on order

The problem of the relationship between the order of the world and the existence of God was first criticized by Hume. In his book “God and Philosophy”, Antony Flew examines the issue of order in the world and its relationship with the existence of God, and explains that there are not enough reasons to attribute order to an outside order-maker. He says that it is not possible to get help in this matter through Darwin's scientific explanation in the field of the order of living beings; Because this argument cannot explain the God of the gaps (Flew, 1988, pp. 4-50).

Flew explains that based on Aquinas's view on the order of nature, the existing order in the world proves the existence of a regulator and God. Theists believe that in order to examine the order of the world, one must look outside of it and prove God as an intelligent regulator (Ibid.p.63). In criticizing this view, Flew says that we should not look for an external regulator to explain order, because the world, as a thing with its own order, does not need an external cause; Therefore, as we can see, the existing order in the world by itself does not indicate the recognition and identification of a moderator unless there are strong and valid reasons for its existence elsewhere (Ibid, p. 68).

In general, Flew believes that the main confrontation of atheists against the arguments of theists about proving a regulator through the acceptance of order and harmony and coherence in nature is that they say that the order of existence does not need a separate explanation other than the soul of existence and that beings are the explanation of existence. They are self-ordering without needing an external cause. He says that it is wrong to think that the responsibility of providing a logical reason rests with the naturalists; It is quite the opposite.

The principle is that all the properties that are seen in objects are properties that naturally belong to the objects themselves, and therefore all the properties that we may be able to consider as a general property for the world are non-derivative and fixed properties of the world itself. This is atheism. Flew says in violation of the argument of order and moderator, it is said that order requires moderator, which means that the two are conceptually related to each other. In fact, they are additional concepts that the imagination of one necessarily requires the imagination of another. He considers this idea wrong and says that it is easy to imagine an order without a moderator and a cause, and thus there is no relationship between the two. In other words, there is no contradiction in the idea of order without a moderator, so in the same discussion, he points out the difference between the concepts of plan and designer and order and moderator, and accepts the relationship between the first two concepts; While he considers the concepts of order and moderator to be empty of two conceptual aspects, Flew's criticisms of the teleological argument are based on

what Hume said in this regard (Flew, 2014, pp. 19-21). Flew also believes that most of the arguments, including teleological argument, are based on a presupposition that religious people consider to be certain. Their obvious and certain presupposition is that there is a divine being in the world Who is a creator and He is incomprehensible or difficult for human understanding, and then based on the obvious or certain assumption in His being they turned into making arguments.

Therefore, their arguments should be considered as a functional argument which is under certain belief and assumption (Pour-Hasan, 1401, p. 164). From Antony Flew's point of view, teleological argument is optimistic, and for this reason, it did not pay attention to its flaws; it is also ineffective and it does not have the ability to accurately prove the existence of God (ibid., p. 165).

By accepting the teleological argument as a worthy reason to prove the existence of God, Ralph McInerny argues that it is not strange for humans to believe in God due to the possibility of observing the order, the program and the lawfulness of the natural phenomena of the world. He believes that the idea of God is almost internal. Therefore, while Plantinga argued that theists are not responsible for providing evidence, McInerny goes beyond that and says that the responsibility for providing evidence should be on the shoulders of atheists. (Flew, 2022, p. 66).

In general, in response to Flew's critical idea, it can be said that he is confused and he claims that because the proofs of order can be undermined, the principle of the argument is incorrect. This is not a positive reasoning, but only a violation, and its foundation is based on the negative approach, which Hume also used as the basis of his criticisms in his works.

In the book "Belief in God", George Mavrodes also emphasizes that atheists such as Hume and Antony Flew could not show that the proofs of theism are completely false and are unable to prove the existence of God. Rather, they only pointed out the shortcomings of the proofs, including the cosmological, existential, and teleological arguments, and simply claimed that God does not exist because of the problems in the arguments (Pour-Hasan, 2022, p. 164).

It can be said that the mistake of Hume and the atheists in criticizing the teleological argument is that they considered it an empirical and even allegorical argument; While in the thought of philosophers such as Farabi and Ave Sina, teleological argument is an a priori, rational analogical argument.

There is a fundamental and important criticism concerning Flew's problems raising about teleological argument. In fact, in response to the atheists, including Flew, it can be said that theists did not present teleological argument to be exclusive and no thinker and philosopher, even the most optimistic of them, claimed that this argument is the only reason or the most important argument to prove the existence of God. Their main claim was that among the five basic arguments in proving God, teleological argument is an empirical and concrete argument, and at the same time a posteriori and realistic argument, a useful and powerful argument, and it is compatible with the theory of the end of the universe, universe being intelligent, the need for a wise, logical and smart subject and an efficient system and a glorious universe.

Atheism

The Presumption of Atheism is the name of the third work of the first period of Antony Flew's life, which was written and published a decade after the publication of "God and Philosophy". His purpose in writing this article, which was later published in the form of a book, was to show that the basic principle in thinking is to follow proof; Wherever the proofs take us, we should listen to them. This view of his is in contrast to his negative approaches in his previous works; But upon reflection, we find out that what he means by the proof is the lack of a sufficient and complete reason, or in other words, the principle of denial; Because he emphasizes here that his duty is to deny and duty of a believer in God is to prove and provide evidence. Flew says that what I want to examine in this work is the discussion about the existence of God, which must start from the premise of atheism. The premise of atheism is that God does not exist unless the believer presents strong evidence for his existence. Therefore, in proving the existence of God, the responsibility of providing evidence must be on the shoulders of the believer. Therefore, the presupposition of

atheism is similar to presupposition of innocence; Because, as in presupposition of innocence, the plaintiff is responsible for providing proof, in the Presumption of Atheism, the said responsibility rests on the shoulders of the believer (Flew, 1972, pp. 34-40).

There is a difference between the two meanings of atheist, positive and negative. Based on this, in the Presumption of Atheism, the word atheist in Flew's thought is interpreted in its non-conventional meaning and applied to someone who is not just a believer. Therefore, for the conventional meaning of disbeliever, Flew uses the word "positive atheist" and for the non-conventional meaning, the word "negative atheist", which indicates an impartial approach in the conflict between theists and deniers of the existence of God (Flew, 2014, p. 118).

In addition, in the presupposition of atheism, a difference should be made between atheism and agnosticism. An agnostic person" accepts the proposition that "God" exists, but is not aware of its truth. But in the presupposition of atheism, the existence of God must be looked at from a special perspective. Presupposition of atheism is the principle of Flew's view of atheism, which emphasizes the principle of following reason; even when in the book "there is a god", he somehow acknowledged the existence of a origin with intelligence and emphasized on this principle, and like Clifford in the book of "ethics", he considers the search for reasons as a fundamental belief and a methodological starting point. (Flew, 2007, pp.56-57)

In general, Flew believes in the Presupposition of atheism that the basic principle in thinking is to be a follower of reason; Therefore, God does not exist unless the believer presents strong reasons for God's existence. This presupposition is subject to a certain methodical framework in which he judges the truth and falsity of the reasons presented without the accusation of theism or atheism. This method emphasizes that until sufficient evidence for the existence of God can not be found, the rational position is negative atheism or agnosticism (Flew, 1972, p. 38-45). From his point of view, accepting God cannot be achieved without primary assurance. The claim of the theists about the existence of a divine being with a real nature and

researchable characteristics is acceptable that it is tested by rational reasons (rational for him means empirical or scientific) (Flew, 1972, p.38).

Kai Nielsen believes that Flew needs to show that believers and skeptics share a common concept of rationality which enjoys a necessary criterion for evaluating the validity of their different claims. He also believes that if Flew does not present a generally acceptable concept of rationality, his premise of atheism will face a big question mark. Also, he believes that showing that a reason is invalid or false does not mean that the result of that reason is false. ... Maybe all arguments for the existence of God fail, but it may still be affirmed that God exists (Flew, 1401, pp. 65-66).

Rationality and diversity of belief systems

Rationalism without regarding religion and neglecting religious experience, the question of the meaning of rationality, the distinction between lack of reason and necessity, and the fundamental difference between belief systems, are strong criticisms that important thinkers have made on Flew's idea. Philosophers and Thinkers such as John Hick Kay, Nielsen, Ralph McInerney, Michael Scriven, Antony Kenny, and Plantinga have introduced fundamental and important criticisms on the presupposition of atheism and the presupposition of Flew's atheism. John Hick, in the book "Theology Today", responded to the problems raised by Flew and the principle of evidence based on the belief and experience of a religious person and says that if a religious person experiences the reality of God's existence, according to the reasonableness of the beliefs of a believer, it can be concluded that the belief which is given to him by his experience is reasonable. Hick believes that believing in the existence of God in the form of a religious experience can be valid in a correct way. In opposition to Hick's point of view, Flew puts forward criticisms that all objections come back to a single issue called "the difference between reason and claim". First, he says that there should be a difference between religious belief and experience and rational arguments. If a religious person even claims in a reasonable way that he has this belief in a reasonable way, and claims its correctness

still it cannot be said that this belief is based on evidence unless he provides the evidence.

The second issue is that the presupposition of atheism emphasizes that a person's claim to have religious experience is not equal to having a rational belief. In addition, a distinction must be made between real knowledge and knowledge that a person rationally claims, and knowledge must be separated from mere belief. Therefore, the presupposition of atheism, which is based on epistemological evidence, is incompatible with the mere belief of a religious person (Flew, 1972, pp. 56-67).

On the other hand, Kai Nielsen, who raised objections to the meaning of rationality, believes that without a clear definition of it, a limited and specific meaning cannot be given to rationality; Therefore, he asks Flew to provide a clear and acceptable definition of rationality. From Nielson's point of view, if we cannot get a clear definition of rationality, the assumption of atheism will be in great ambiguity (Flew, 2007, p. 54). Nielson says that if we show that a reason is invalid, it cannot necessarily be inferred that the result of that alleged reason is false; Because all proofs of God's existence may fail based on a special criterion called Flew's rationality; But this does not mean that God does not exist (Kai, 1977, pp.143-147).

Michael Scriven, who is a follower of the rationalist approach, has given a different answer to Antony Flew's objections to the non-existence of God. He says that if there is no reason to confirm the first proposition, it is reasonable to accept the negative proposition; But the absence of a reason for the second proposition does not mean that we accept the positive proposition. Plantinga says Scriven's answer is not very satisfactory; Because his encounter with the two propositions of God does not exist and God exists is not the same (Glass, 2010, pp. 66-67).

Plantinga has provided a more comprehensive answer to Flew's problems and in the book "intellect and faith", he differentiates between three types of belief, that is, among belief in other minds, perception and memory. Basically, outside of Flew's rationalism approach, he claims that belief in God is considered the basis. He

believes that there are different conditions and situations that cause belief in God, which can occur outside of the reasons of interest. These conditions can be just inner faith, taking personal risks, feeling the presence of God, feeling talking to God, knowing the truth, being affected by something beautiful, etc. Therefore, we are dealing with beliefs such as “God speaks to us”, “may God forgive me”, “God should be praised” and “God is the creator of everything”. The mentioned propositions require the existence of God and are the basis. From his point of view, all these propositions can justify a person in accepting the beliefs (Plantinga, 2002, pp. 187-187). Plantinga believes that we rely on our cognitive abilities in all the above cases; Even if we cannot prove the truth of those beliefs.

Break from Atheism

Antony Flew has defended the position of atheists for nearly half a century and his works and writings from 1950-2004 aroused many reactions. From the 1950s to the following 50 years when he made an intellectual turn in believing in the existence of God and apparently he changed his position on the existence of God, many debates and discussions with theists such as Alvin Plantinga, Ralph McInerney, Terry Myatt, William P. Alston George, Morodes Gary Habermas, Richard Swinburne, Thomas Warren William Lane, Craig David Kenway and finally Gerald Schroeder and John Haldane did, the influence of these conversations and his correspondence with Richard Dawkins on his change of position cannot be ignored. It can be said that the first change in Antony Flew's life as a non-fanatic atheist dates back to the years after the publication of Hume's *Philosophy of Belief*. From Flew's point of view, Hume's claim that there is no real experience and perception of physical necessity and refusal is incorrect. In addition, he believes that Hume did not adhere to his agnostic position and causes and effects of the outside world (Flew, 58.p, 2007). Flew was against the compatibilists' point of view about the issue of free will;

Because they believed in both the free will and determinism of certain relationships in determining the future. From Flew's point of view, two different meanings should

be taken into account: the cause of the human actions and the causes of non-human actions, and determinism, that is, determinism through physical causes and determinism through behavioral causes, and distinguished from each other. From Flew's point of view, Hume has been unable to understand the mentioned distinctions; For this reason, Flew says that under the influence of compatibilists, what I have stated about the freedom of choice and in the religious and non-religious sphere needs to be revised (Flew, 2015, pp. 121-126).

The baselessness of the presupposition of atheism

In a debate with the Christian philosopher Thomas B. Warren, in response to the question of whether there is a God, Flew says that he knew there was no God or he saw or have any adequate and sufficient evidence against the proposition that the universe has no beginning and no end. and he was of the opinion that the living organism has evolved from non-living materials in a long and incalculable period of time (Flew, 2014, p. 134). Ten years after the aforementioned debate, Flew, along with three atheists, namely Wallace Mattson, Kai Nielsen and Paul Kurtz, debated with Plantinga Alston Morodes and McInerney. In this debate, both sides insisted on their positions. Antony Flew emphasized on the premise of atheism, while Plantinga defended the view that belief in God is properly basic. The next two debates were about the resurrection of Christ with Habermas and about the existence of God with Myatt, which was actually nothing more than re-reading the debates about the incompatibility of the concept of God and the presupposition of atheism (ibid, p. 135-136). In the 1980s, Flew had an important and long debate with Richard Swinburne, the most famous defender of theism in the world. In these debates, Swinburne defended the existence of God and the existence of the non-physical soul; While Flew was generally opposed to the existence of a disembodied soul, Flew had an important debate with Craig about how the universe came to be.

In this debate, William Lane Craig believed that the origin of the universe and its complex order is only based on the assumption of the existence of God, which can be the best explanation; While Flew considered the knowledge of the

world to be dependent on the Big Bang theory being accepted as the ultimate reality. Flew went beyond this and believed that even the most complex creatures of the world are the product of non-intelligent physical and mechanical forces.

In addition to debates with theists, Flew also corresponded with Richard Dawkins. Flew disagreed with Dawkins' view of the selfish gene theory. Referring to the book of Darwinian evolution, Flew says that natural selection does not create anything positive. Natural selection only eliminates everything that cannot compete. It is destructive and does not have a scientific and correct basis. Flew believes that the book "The Selfish Gene" like "The Naked Monkey" or "Human Wildlife" written by Desmond Morris is destructive and does not have a scientific and correct foundation. According to Dawkins, the main method of producing human behavior is to assign characteristics to genes that can be meaningfully attributed only to humans. He emphasizes that humans are creatures lacking control of their own genes (*ibid.*, pp. 142-144).

The beginning of Flew's theism or intellectual turn appeared with his research on nature. In an interview with Gary Habermas in 2005, he said about his change of position: According to Madle's view on the existence of God, who according to Aristotle has power and knowledge, has become stronger than before. David Kenway, a famous British philosopher, in his book "Recovery of Wisdom: from here to ancient times in search of wisdom" has put forward reasons for the existence of God. Flew influenced by him considers their God to be Aristotle's God. Kenway asserts that the being that Aristotle regards as the explanation of the world and its expanded form, in his idea is immutable, incorporeal, absolute power, unlimited, unique or indivisible knowledge, absolute good, and necessary existence. Doubtlessly among attributes of origin in Aristotle and what is attributed to God in Christianity or Judaism, there is a lot of similarity. This point completely justifies the view that Aristotle had the same divine existence as the cause of the world in mind, which belongs to the question in these two religions (*i.e.*, pp. 157-158). Both philosophers, Flew and Kenway agreed that understanding of the existence and nature of such God is possible by practicing pure human reasoning.

Laws of science and theory of planning

Theists believe that the best argument for the existence of God is the theory of planning. This argument shows that the obvious planning in nature leads us to the existence of a manager, that is, the existence of God in the world. In other words, in the reflections of philosophers and theologians, there were always questions such as “Who is the creator of the world and established the laws of nature”, and they tried to provide a reasoned and convincing answer for it. During the period of atheism, Antony Flew was strongly against any kind of argument for the design of the world and the defense of the resourceful existence; At the same time, in the same period, despite criticisms, he emphasized that if this argument is formulated correctly, it can become an important proof to prove the existence of God. During his intellectual revolution, Antony Flew stated that the progress achieved in two specific scientific fields was a proof of his new belief: that the origin of the laws of nature and the insights of new scientists, the origin of life and reproduction, and the issue of the order of the world were important and fundamental issues which played a role in Flew's intellectual transformation.

Citing Stephen Hawking's point of view in the book “History of Time”, he says: The most intelligent person's encounter with God is the same, and we know that the world is amazingly designed and organized. Flew says that Einstein also agrees with this view. According to Einstein, anyone who is seriously engaged in science is convinced that the laws of nature indicate the existence of a spirit that is much greater than the human spirit; A spirit that we, with our very limited powers, should feel humbled before (Flew, 2007, p. 91). Einstein says about his belief in God I do not believe in a personal God and I have never denied this but have expressed it clearly. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it. (Einstein, 1981, p. 32).

In his book “God and Philosophy”, Flew says that Einstein's God is the same as Spinoza's God (Flew, 2007, p.12). He emphasizes that Max Planck, Werner

Heisenberg, Erwin Schrödinger and Paul Dirac, of the most prominent thinkers of quantum physics, put forward a point of view close to this approach and consider divine intelligence as the result of their research and scientific achievements (Barrow, 2006).

Antony Flew says in the book “There is a God” that reason dictates to me that it is very difficult or almost impossible to imagine this infinite and wonderful world together with man with his abilities to search for the past and the distant future as an accident and blind necessity. When I “think” or “feel” compelled to search for an origin for the universe that has an intelligent mind somewhat similar to the human mind, I therefore deserve to be called a theist (Flew, 2007, 106.p).

Swinburne in the book “Is there a God?” has explained that by referring to the most fundamental laws of physics, if the speed of light as a fundamental particle was not far from the current value, then there would be no possibility for the existence of a planet capable of the evolution of human life (Swinburne, 2008, p.93-97). In his view, there is rarely a thinker today who adheres to the absolutely blind chance view advocated by Hume and Dawkins. Scientists such as John Leslie do not claim that the above order is purely random. Leslie is one of the anthropocentric theorists who explains in the book “Unlimited Minds” that divine planning is the best explanation for finding order; As Swinburne also believes, the explanation of the world based on the assumption of the existence of God is more simple (ibid., pp. 82-85).

The ultimate argument is one of the arguments that questions and criticizes the lack of consciousness and the absence of God in the creation and continuation of life in the world. How does life, as a living and ultimate phenomenon, originate from the non-living? In response, Flew says that the emergence of vital signs from lifeless matter is impossible. In 2005, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times magazine, he stated that there is no answer to the question of how the first signs of life originated from non-living matter and developed into the most complex form of creation (Yahya, 2005, p.19). Flew in the answer to Carl Vose's point of view points out that nowadays the issues related to the coding, mechanism and the evolution

happened in genes are discussed as independent topics. He considers the view that the characteristic of genes is a function of some basic physical principles to be obsolete. According to him, this characteristic is not a function of any physical principle and the rules do not give us much information about the existence of the code and how the transmission mechanism is (Flew, 2007, p.128). Flew agrees with Vose and Paul Davis that belief in a higher intelligence is the best option. Like thinkers such as Lazcano, Andy Nall, John Maddox, George Waldo, Gerald Schroeder, he believes that science is incapable of finding the right answer to the question of life. He believes that the big bang theory caused all the previous equations to be messed up and all approaches to change. The big bang theory was of great importance with general acceptance and is based on the principle of the world's dynamics and its finality. Flew admits that this theory had a significant effect on changing his attitude (Kroll, 2008).

Conclusion

1. Antony Flew believes that the atheists' claim that the evil in the world does not conflict with religious beliefs suffers from meaninglessness and that it is a meaningful statement that can be refuted in certain situations. He believes that the answer of the believers may not reject anything; But it does not prove either.

Flew has made the mistake of analogizing and neglecting the fundamental difference between God's existence as a supreme being and other beings as natural beings and, like Hume, he has taken the point of view of similarity between the existence of God and other beings. In addition, he has confused the existence of God and the meaningfulness of His attributes. Regarding the meaninglessness of religious propositions, Flew is under the influence of logical positivism, and with a lack of proper understanding of language of religion considers monotheistic theistic language as an explanatory language. The fourth criticism can also be considered as a fundamental flaw in his intellectual foundation about falsifiability, which has not been paid much attention by researchers so far. In fact, Antony Flew did not pay close attention to the issue of distinguishing the dual status, i.e. propositional and

form of life, and therefore he did not pay attention to the difference between the irrefutability of propositions as an explanation with the conditions affecting the entire human life.

2. Flew believes that the responsibility of providing proof for the existence of God rests with the theists, and it is wrong to think that the responsibility of providing proof logically rests with naturalists. In general, to respond Flew's critical view, it can be said that he is confused about the order and he claims that because the proofs of the order can be undermined, the principle of the argument is incorrect. This is not a positive argument; Rather, it is only a violation and its foundation is based on a negative approach; While in the thought of philosophers like Al-Farabi and Ave Sina, the Teleological argument is an analogical, a priori and rational argument.

3. In the presupposition of atheism, Flew is of the opinion that the basic principle in thinking is to be a follower of reason; Therefore, God does not exist unless the believer presents strong reasons for God's existence. The claim of the theists about the existence of a divine being with a real nature and researchable characteristics is acceptable when it is tested by rational reasons (rational for him means empirical or scientific). Rationalism without regard to religiousness and neglecting the experience of religiousness, the question of the correct meaning of rationality, the distinction between lack of reason and necessity, and the fundamental difference between types of beliefs are strong criticisms that important thinkers have made on Flew's idea. Theists and thinkers such as John Hick, Ralph, McInerney, Michael Scriven, Antony Kenny, and Plantinga have introduced fundamental and important criticisms on the assumption of atheism and the premise of Flew's atheism.

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