**Apologetics and the Hiddenness of God**

Some claim that since so many do not believe in God, He must not be there, since if He was there, He would make himself more obvious. An all-good and all-powerful being would not leave us in the dark. This session will argue that He has not done so, but that we need to approach God in the right way to come to know Him. Blaise Pascal will be the central inspiration in this.

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The fool says in their heart, “There is no God’ (Psalm 14:1).

“If I saw no sign [in nature] of Divinity I should decide on a negative solution: if I saw signs of a Creator everywhere, I should peacefully settle down in faith. But, seeing too much to deny and not enough to affirm, I am in a pitiful state, where I have wished a hundred times over that, if there is a God supporting nature, she should unequivocally proclaim him, and that, if the signs in nature are deceptive, they should be completely erased; that nature should say all or nothing so that I could see what course I ought to follow.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Voice of a skeptic in Pascal’s *Pensées*.

1. **Where is God?**
2. What is apologetics?

Defending Christian worldview as objectively true, compelling rational, and pertinent to all of life (1 Peter 3:15)

1. Apologetics and the hiddenness of God
2. Friederick Nietzsche’s statement

“A god who is all-knowing and all-powerful and who does not even make sure that his creatures understand his intention—could that be a god of goodness? Who allows countless doubts and dubieties to persist, for thousands of years, as though the salvation of mankind were unaffected by them, and who on the other hand holds out the prospect of frightful consequences if any mistake is made as to the nature of truth?”[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. The formal argument
2. If God exists as all-good and all-powerful, there would be no honest atheists, since God would want people to know him. That is, no one could be rationally justified in their unbelief in the existence of God. There would be no nonculpable unbelief.
3. There are honest atheists. That is, there are atheists who are rationally justified in their unbelief. So, there is nonculpable unbelief.
4. Therefore, God does not exist.
5. This is a valid argument, but (b) needs be questioned
6. **The Existence of God and Hiddenness**
7. Objective evidence for God’s existence
8. Natural theology: cosmological, design, moral, religious experience, ontological arguments, and more.
9. Historical evidence: reliability of the New Testament and the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus
10. If (A), why claim of hiddenness?
11. Explain hiddenness claim within intellectual orbit of Christianity based on (A)
12. **Self-deception and Divine Hiddenness**
13. What is self-deception?

Philosopher Ian DeWeese Boyd puts it,

“Minimally, self-deception involves a person who seems to acquire and maintain some false belief in the teeth of evidence to the contrary as a consequence of some motivation, and who may display behavior suggesting some awareness of the truth.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. The adequacy of evidence for God (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-21) from general revelation
2. The allowance for God-avoidance

If [God] had wished to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened, he could have done so by revealing himself to them so plainly that they could not doubt the truth of his essence, as he will appear on the last day. . . .This is not the way he wished to appear when he came in mildness, because so many men had shown themselves unworthy of his clemency, that he wished to deprive them of the good they did not desire. It was therefore not right that he should appear in a manner divine and absolutely capable of convincing all men, but neither was it right that his coming should be so hidden that he could not be recognized by those who sincerely sought him. He wished to make himself perfectly recognizable to them. Thus wishing to appear openly to those who seek him with all their heart and hidden from those who shun him with all their heart, he has qualified our knowledge of him by giving signs which can be seen by those who seek him and not by those who do not.

‘There is enough light for those who desire only to see, and enough darkness for those of a contrary disposition.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. The logic of self-deception
2. Initial evidence for God
3. Desire to live independently of God and not give thanks
4. Replacing God with God-substitutes (idols)
5. Deadening of conscience and hardening into unbelief
6. **Hiddenness and Seeking God**
7. There is enough evidence and prudential concern (Pascal’s wager) to seek God even if God seems hidden
8. If God seems hidden today, he may not be tomorrow; don’t give up (Matthew 7:7-11)
9. Encourage those who find God hidden to give God a chance by reading the Bible and some Christian books on finding God
10. If applicable, share with doubters your own times when God seems hidden. I do this in my book, *Walking through Twilight: A Wife’s Illness—A Philosopher’s Lament* (InterVarsity, 2017).
11. Encourage doubters that you are there to pray for them and supply help if they do desire

**Bibliography**

1. Blaise Pascal, *The Mind on Fire*, ed. James Houston (Regent Publishing, 2003). Contains portions of *Pensées* and other writings.
2. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics* (InterVarsity Press, 2011).
3. Douglas Groothuis, *On Pascal* (Wadsworth, 2003).
4. Michael Rea, *The Hiddenness of God* (Oxford, 2018).
5. James Schellenberg, *The Hiddenness Argument* (Oxford, 2015). The atheist argument advocated.
6. R. C. Sproul, *If There is a God, Why Are There Atheists?* (Christian Focus, revised edition, 2018).
7. James Spiegel, *The Making of an Atheist* (Moody, 2010).

1. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. and ed., Alban Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 429/229, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. # Ian DeWeese Boyd, “Self-Deception,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:* [*https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/self-deception*](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/self-deception)*.*

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Pascal, 149/430, p. 79-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)