

# A Critical Analysis of Graham Oppy's View of Arguments about God

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## Abstract

Graham Oppy is an analytical philosopher in the contemporary era. He acknowledges the rationality of theistic, as well as non-theistic, beliefs, but he does not consider them successful for arguing for or against God. In general, a successful argument is one that persuades all reasonable persons who have reasonable views about the issue in question. His basic criterion for the success of an argument is its ability to convince all reasonable persons who previously denied, or were undecided about, its conclusion. The present article tries to answer the following question: Is Oppy's standard for a satisfactory argument acceptable, and what challenges does it face? I conclude that his criterion, which renders all the traditional arguments for God's existence unsuccessful, is pessimistic and self-defeating, because Oppy cannot provide a successful argument, by his own lights, for the correctness of his standard. He seems to propagate agnosticism, with a vague criterion, regardless of the difference between rational reason and argument from the common sense (sound judgment argument), and defending a kind of strong rationalism.

**Keywords:** Graham Oppy, rational reason, strong rationalism, argument about God, ethics of belief.

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## Introduction

Graham Oppy is not a theist, although he often acknowledges the rationality of theistic beliefs, as he acknowledges that of non-theistic beliefs. In his well-known work, *Arguing about gods*, Oppy provides a criterion for arriving at a successful argument, asserts that theists fail to present a successful argument for their claims, and shows that they fail to modify the classical theistic arguments successfully. Oppy applies Hume's method to post-Humean modifications of theistic arguments, and exhibits the same rigorous skepticism as that of the interlocutor Philo from *Dialogues*. Oppy believes that post-Humean theists have not successfully responded to Hume (Anderson 2007, 593). He is fair and even-handed in his presentation of ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, but he concludes that no successful form of these arguments has been given to date. The ontological argument, for example, imports the idea of God into its premises (thus becoming circular), and where it does not do so, its conclusion falls short of the God of monotheism. Cosmological arguments face the same problem, and above that, they face challenges about the need for a first cause. Moreover, cosmological arguments fail to prove the necessity of the primitive cause, and assuming that they do so, they do not establish the characteristics of the God of theistic religions. This is because arguments for the temporal contingency of the physical world, made by thinkers such as William Craig, are inadequate, and even assuming a temporal beginning for the world, it does not prove the necessity of the existence of a metaphysical cause. Furthermore, Oppy believes teleological arguments fail to deliver the goods, admitting that proponents of such arguments have not yet offered convincing answers to Hume's critique. Even if we assume that sciences do not reject the existence of an intelligent designer, the designer is not necessarily the intelligent God of monotheistic religions, and things such as irreducible complexities can be explained without resorting to God's existence (Oppy 2006, 2-4).

Having provided a historical background, Oppy presents a comprehensive categorization, criticizing the argument in an analytical context from an agnostic viewpoint. I evaluate one of the most important tenets of Oppy's account: a criterion he uses to identify successful arguments, by dint of which all arguments for God's existence are considered ineffective.

## 1. Preliminary Issues

Oppy seeks to clarify the relevant notions to his discussion:

**Theism and Atheism:** Theism is the view that there is at least one god. Atheism is the view that there are no gods. Consequently, theism and atheism are contradictory views: they both cannot be true, and they both cannot be false either. Monotheism is the view that there is exactly one god. If monotheism is true, then the one god that exists is properly called “God.” Thus, if monotheism is true, God exists.

**Naturalism:** Naturalism is the view that there are no supernatural agents or forces or structures. Consequently, naturalism and supernaturalism are contradictory views: they both cannot be true, and they both cannot be false.

**Proof:** A proof is a derivation of a conclusion, i.e. a sequence of steps that terminates with the desired conclusion, where each step in the sequence is provided with an appropriate kind of justification. In the most general case, a proof involves premises or assumptions; however, there are proofs in which there are no premises or assumptions (Oppy 2016).

**Argument:** An argument is a collection of sentences—or thoughts, claims, beliefs, propositions, or what have you—one of which is identified as the conclusion, and the rest of which are the premises. The word “argument” is also sometimes used to denote a chain of reasoning or inference that takes you from premises to conclusions. Oppy is not much interested in that sense of argument; he is interested in the role that arguments might play in debates (Oppy 2013, 8-9). Oppy uses the word “argument” more often than he uses the word “proof.” He believes that there are not successful proofs or arguments for the existence or non-existence of God.

## 2. Oppy’s Standard for a Successful Argument

The most challenging of Oppy’s critiques of arguments for or against the existence of God is that these arguments are not successful. Therefore, before examining and reviewing his views, we should first evaluate his criterion for a successful argument. Unfortunately, Oppy is not clear enough on the features of, and methods of forming and devising, a successful argument. In chapter 1 of his book *Arguing about gods* he says: “When should we say that an

argument for a given conclusion is a successful argument? I defend the view that, in circumstances in which it is well known that there has been perennial controversy about a given claim, a successful argument on behalf of that claim has to be one that ought to persuade all of those who have hitherto failed to accept that claim to change their minds” (Oppy 2006, 1).

Undoubtedly, theists make claims over which there has been a long controversy, and a theistic argument counts as successful only if it can persuade all atheists, agnostics, and innocents to change their minds. It should be noted that Oppy does not explicitly deny the truth of theism or the rationality of monotheistic beliefs, but he believes that theists have not provided successful arguments for God’s existence. According to Oppy, any rational argument is not necessarily a good reason.

The term “successful” as used by Oppy is ambiguous. He sometimes sees a “successful” argument as a “good” argument (Oppy 2006, 10) and sometimes he argues that a good argument is the one that properly transmits the truth or acceptance of its premises to its conclusion (Oppy 2006, 12). His account of a “good” argument seems valid, as it specifies reasonable logical conditions for moving from premises to conclusions; for example, the move should not be circular or question-begging. Now, such a valid argument is successful only if it can change the views of wise persons; otherwise, it is valid, but unsuccessful. In Oppy’s book, the word “good” is often synonymous with “successful.” As for the word “argument” in Oppy’s works, he has in mind not only deductive, but also statistical and probabilistic arguments (such as inductive inferences). In explaining his standard for a “successful” argument, Graham Oppy asserts that audiences of these arguments are reasonable people with rational views about the issue in question, and a successful argument for the existence of God is the one that persuades them to change their minds. So if we find that certain persons have not been persuaded by our argument, we have two options: we can conclude either that the people in question are not rational or else that our argument is a failure (Oppy 2006, 13-14).

The fact is that people are not always rational in forming their beliefs, and hence, Oppy dedicates a chapter of his book, *Arguing about Gods*, to a discussion of the ethics of belief. “Ethics of belief” is a term first used by Clifford. He defended the stringent principle that we have the duty to have sufficient evidence for every one of our beliefs. Clifford's fundamental principle in ethics of belief is the following: “It is wrong always, everywhere,

and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence.” He goes on to say that any belief held upon insufficient evidence is reprehensible, emphasizing that inquiry into evidence of a doctrine is not to be made and settled once for all. It is never lawful to stifle a doubt, for either it can be honestly answered by means of the inquiry already made, or else it proves that the inquiry was not adequate. Clifford’s opinion is that no religious belief system is capable of meeting the high standards of proof that should govern all of our believing, and so a reasonable and moral person must do without religious belief (Clifford 1970, 159-60).

Oppy reviews the arguments put forward by theists for the existence of God. He examines them one by one and shows that they are not successful. Each of these arguments is based on assumptions that a rational person can deny. This method makes it possible, in the case of every argument, to produce almost every imaginable objection, because anything that can replace one of the premises of a monotheistic argument—even if it is unlikely or obviously false—might be unreasonable to believe. For example, he says in his objection against the argument of miracle: “For even if it were conceded that the parting of the Red Sea occurred, it is not clear that the parting of the Red Sea demands a supernatural explanation; and, more important, even if the parting of the Red Sea does demand a supernatural explanation, it is not clear that the best supernatural explanation is to suppose that it is the result of the actions of an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god ... if you are not antecedently convinced that there is an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god, then it is much less clear that you are obliged to suppose that the best supernatural explanation of the parting of the Red Sea is that it is the result of the actions of an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god. It isn't hard to dream up alternative supernatural explanations that those who are not antecedently convinced of the existence of an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god may well find no less plausible” (Oppy 2006, 377).

In his book, *The Best Argument against God*, he says about the properties of a successful argument: “We shall suppose that there are just two. First, the conclusion of the argument should be supported by the premises: perhaps the conclusion is a logical consequence of the premises, or perhaps the conclusion is made probable by the premises, or perhaps the conclusion is made more likely than not by the premises etc. Second, the premises of the argument should all be believed by the opponent in the debate. Thus, if Naturalist is trying to convince Theist that God does not exist by appealing to an argument,

then the argument in question should have as its premises only claims that Theist accepts. (The point of introducing an argument into a debate is precisely to draw explicit attention to a putative problem in the beliefs of the other person – a putative logical inconsistency, or a putative probabilistic inconsistency, or a putative explanatory inconsistency or the like. Arguments need not play any role in debates, as debates can proceed primarily in terms of invitations to explain how certain considerations are accommodated or explained on the view held by the other side. A debater has reason to give an argument only if he or she supposes that the opponent cannot see the import of certain considerations that the opponent has already accepted or been brought to accept)” (Oppy 2013, 9-10).

Of course, Oppy has recently changed his view of successful arguments. On his modified view, if someone presents an argument to someone else, then the premises of that argument should be what the other person accepts. If the conclusion of the argument is not something that the person already accepts, and if the conclusion appears to be supported by the premises, then his argument gives the other person some work to do. (They may accept the conclusion, or they may change their mind about one or more of the premises, or they may dispute the claim that the conclusion is supported by the premises. What they cannot do is say, yes, I accept the premises, and I accept that the conclusion is sufficiently strongly supported by the premises, but no, I do not accept the conclusion, and I think that this is all completely unproblematic.) This is what it is for an argument to be successful: it gives those to whom the argument is directed work to do. Suppose that you give someone an argument with premises they do not accept. Then they will just say: I do not accept those premises. And that is the end of the road for *that* argument, at least for now. There are really just two important roles for arguments. First, you can use them to show that someone else's position is inconsistent (logically, probabilistically, explanatorily, or whatever). Second, you can use them to show that, if they hold fixed what they currently believe, then someone else is committed to further claims, to which they may not have noticed their commitment by what they currently believe. An argument is a set of premises and a conclusion. A derivation shows you how to get from the premises to the conclusion (see Oppy 2016; 2015 on this subject).

A theory in this field is that of “rationality and spirituality” proposed by Mustafa Malekiyan, a contemporary Iranian philosopher and thinker. This theory attempts to alleviate human suffering and bring tranquility back into

his/her mind by bridging the gap between rationality and spirituality. This in fact has been religion's main purpose; however, religion is assumed not very successful in this regard due to its unawareness of human's current afflictions and likely solutions for that, therefore spirituality is proposed as a good replacement at the present time. The main objective of the theory of spirituality-rationality is "to alleviate the sufferings and pains of human beings." The theorist replaces religion by spirituality because he believes that today it is only spirituality that can bring peace and reduce human sufferings, and thus, it should replace the traditional form of religion.

In this theory, Malekiyan accuses the believers of irrationality, even if they present all sorts of arguments for their beliefs. He points out that a characteristic of a modern person is his rationality as manifested in his reasoning. Reasoning implies that, for a belief to be accepted, there should be a plausible reason in its favor. In Malekiyan's view, modern rationality is not compatible with the attribute of obedience that exists in traditional religions such that a traditional religion is inconceivable without obedience, and a religious person ought to adhere to the principles of that religion. In Malekiyan's perspective, obedience implies that a belief is admitted just because a certain person has said so, although there is no convincing reason behind it (Malekiyan 1388 Sh, 274-75). Considering the fact that a modern human believes only in what he has a reason for, he cannot hold beliefs for which there is no reasonable argument; that is, those that are just stated by a particular authority. On the other hand, all traditional religions rely upon historical events insomuch that a conventional believer is not considered religious without accepting some historical narratives. For instance, one who refutes the crucifixion of Jesus and his sacrifice to save human beings is not deemed religious. Religiosity relies on a resolute belief in a historical event, whereas a modern human cannot recognize historical accounts as certain and irrefutable (Malekiyan 1388 Sh, 275-77). Historical religions present a sort of metaphysics that was reasonable for people in the past, but supernatural powers and metaphysics began to be called into question. In terms of reason and rationality, aspects of metaphysics are unfathomable and thus the incomprehensibility of religion is not acknowledged any more (Malekiyan 1388 Sh, 275-77).

### **3. Rejection of Oppy’s Standard by Contemporary Philosophers**

Oppy’s criterion for a “successful argument” is not “successful” in its own right, because even his own standard has also been rejected by many thinkers and he explicitly confesses this: “I take it that the main thesis that I wish to defend is denied by many contemporary philosophers” (Oppy 2006, xv). Many philosophers and theologians believe that they have presented valid arguments for the existence of God, even if they do not call for revoking and revising the thoughts and beliefs of atheists and agnostics, who deny the premises of their arguments. Even some theologians, despite the challenges facing their arguments and their failure to be logically convincing, still emphasize that such arguments have not lost their function. For example, the ontological argument has faced a variety of important problems in the course of its developments, but theologians have always tried to respond to those critiques and present new versions of the argument. It should not be assumed that the only function of a successful argument is to reform atheistic beliefs, in the absence of which the argument loses its effectiveness and fails. Arguments for the existence of God, even in the absence of such a function, can still be successful in strengthening the faith of believers, and they can help theists in the formation and formulation of a systematic theology.

An important factor in refuting Oppy’s criterion for a successful argument is that he only tries to tell us what a successful argument is, but there is no argument in support of this criterion. Throughout *The Best Argument against God*, there is no trace or indication of an argument for his criterion. He seems to believe that this standard is obviously true and it does not need to be supported by an argument. At the end of the book he concedes that “I have assumed that all *reasonable* parties to the dispute about the existence of orthodoxly conceived monotheistic gods will agree with me about the way in which reason, argument, and dialectic ought to be understood” (Oppy 2013, 425).

Although Oppy’s criterion is not obvious, it is safe to say that it is incompatible with its own merits. On the other hand, philosophers and theologians, or as Oppy would put it, rational people, always contradict the quality of a “successful” argument. Oppy argues that a successful argument is the one that succeeds—or perhaps would or ought to succeed—in bringing



about reasonable belief revision in reasonable targets (Oppy 2013, 10), and is convincing for a rational person who does not already accept the conclusion. Unfortunately, he himself cannot provide such an argument. On the other hand, there are theists who believe that, at least, some of the arguments for the existence of God are successful. Richard Swinburne admits that nowadays there are many doubts about the existence of God and theists should try to deepen the faith of the believers and guide the disbelievers. Therefore, rational theology should be fortified by positive arguments, or contrary evidence should be undermined by negative arguments. Evidence confirms (makes more probable) a hypothesis that explains that, (1) given the hypothesis, the evidence is to be expected, i.e. the hypothesis makes the evidence probable, (2) the evidence is not otherwise to be expected, (3) the hypothesis is simple, and (4) it fits with background knowledge. In assessing hypotheses (such as theism, the hypothesis that there is a God) that purport to explain everything, there is no background knowledge. Theism is a very simple hypothesis. If there is a God, there is reason to expect that He will create a universe, with laws of nature, leading to the evolution of humans (bodies connected to souls), who often have experiences that seem to them as experiences of God. It is impossible that all this evidence existed if there were no God. Taken together, therefore, all this evidence makes it probable that there is a God. Swinburne says: "I have urged that various occurrent phenomena are such that they are more to be expected, more probable, if there is a God than if there is not. The existence of the universe, its conformity to order, the existence of animals and humans with moral awareness, humans having great opportunities for cooperation in acquiring knowledge and molding the universe, the pattern of history and the existence of some evidence of miracles, and finally the occurrence of religious experiences, are all such as we have reason to expect if there is a God, and less reason to expect otherwise" (Swinburne 2004, 328).

In short, Oppy's account appears to be self-defeating, because he fails to provide a successful argument for the truth of this standard. In fact, it is an unimaginable weakness how a thinker and philosopher in the contemporary period writes numerous books and texts based on an important standard, which is not buttressed by a rational ground, a standard through which he dismisses all the arguments proposed by theists and atheists, while eventually, this standard itself is rejected by its own merits. The only way for Oppy to escape this challenge is to show that those theists who think that there are successful arguments are not reasonable persons. However, according to the criteria of a successful argument, Oppy not only fails to show this, but, on the contrary, he

believes that they are reasonable people who provide logical evidence (Oppy 2006, 426).

#### **4. Lack of Distinction between Rational Argument and Argument from the Common Sense**

The question is whether the word “successful” properly applies to argumentations. This seems to be a psychological term, which fails to offer an accurate interpretation of a rational reason. Rational arguments for the existence of God can be classified into three groups:

1. Defective arguments that lack certainty. These arguments are internally corrupt, and in fact, they are not proofs in the proper sense of the term.
2. Those that are not corrupt, but are incomplete: these arguments, albeit not internally corrupt, are in fact proofs. However, they do not independently prove the Necessity Being. These arguments need complements or rely on other arguments for the existence of God
3. Arguments that are complete and certainty-conferring demonstrations (such as the *siddiqin* argument or the proof of the sincere) (Javadi Amoli 1996, 23-22).

The *siddiqin* argument (the proof of the sincere) is a kind of ontological argument in Islamic philosophy. The argument is formulated as follows: the being is the only true reality. The unity of being implies that the being as a reality is not multiple, and differentiation in the being is a matter of gradation or ambiguity, which does not interfere, so to speak, with the reality of the being. This is not to deny the plurality or multiplicity in this world, but it is not inconsistent with the unity of being. Not only plurality and multiplicity, but also limitation, weakness, deficiency, and the like, can and must be explained as effects of a cause, which implies that an effect, as representing a lower level compared to its cause, always has a certain degree of weakness and deficiency, which are ultimately concomitants of non-being. However, existence excludes non-being. Sometimes what exists, inasmuch as it exists, will never become non-existing. Just as, on the other hand, a non-existent entity, inasmuch as it is non-existent, never becomes a being. Being as such is unconditioned, and not dependent on something else. Being as such is also to be equated with absolute perfection, beauty, independence, and limitlessness. Therefore, the reality of

being in its essence, irrespective of the that individuation may be attached to it from the outside, is identical with God's eternal essence. So it is the primacy of existence that guides our mind directly to God's essence, not something else. What is other than God, which to be sure can be only His actions, His effects, and His manifestations, is to be discovered in others ways (Ter Haar 2001, 10-11).

Failure to accept such arguments will lead to an excluded middle, the impossibility of which is admitted by every rational person, and if there is a doubt about the principle, it has an epistemological ground in doubts within the limits of knowledge of the mankind, without having anything to do with success or failure of an argument. This is based on non-epistemic factors, such as the society, psychological states, and family, which might affect the acceptance or rejection of an argument by a rational person. Oppy ultimately claims that theistic arguments are grounded on premises that might reasonably be denied, and a rational person can refuse that argument, without hereby making a logical error. What matters is that Oppy has confused rational arguments with the common sense argument (argument from the sound judgment). The distinction between rational and common sense arguments originates from the difference between reason and rational agents. This is the idea proposed by Islamic philosophers to the effect that man uses two powers: theoretical reason and practical reason, where theoretical reason is concerned with what exists and what does not exist, and practical reason with what ought and what ought not to be done (Ibn Sina 1996, 64-63; and Tusi 1996, 352-53).

The rejection of a rational proof implies an excluded middle; therefore, an argument is rational if its rejection would result in an excluded middle (Tabataba'i 1996, 252). That is what is used in philosophy and logic. In Islamic philosophy, when we talk, for example, about the siddiqin argument, we deal with a rational argument, without trying to imply that if someone dorejects our argument, the he is not rational. The goal is instead to prove the truth of the premises and the validity of the argument. In this way, rational people accept it. We also believe that if one denies such an argument, he in fact accepts the principle of the excluded middle, but a common sense argument relies on a consensus or agreement among rational people, which is sometimes referred to as "praiseworthy opinions" (*al-ara' al-mahmuda*) (Muzaffar 2010, 231-32 and 1428 AH, 342-44).

In other words, rational arguments are those that are largely backed by people's practice in their individual and social lives. Of course, it should be noted that the purpose of people's practices is not something people do based on tolerance, but subjective intuitions of people, which are hidden in the nature of all human beings, and accordingly, people regulate their personal and social lives. In other words, the discovery of a rational argument is in fact the discovery of customary intuitions of people. Rational arguments are deployed mainly in sciences and fields of study, such as jurisprudence, methodology, and ethics. The point to note is that knowing a rational argument requires care and reflection, and it is not easy to achieve, because, on the one hand, it should not lead to a philosophical precision, and on the other hand, it should not be subject to customary carelessness.

In short, if the premises of an argument are absolutely intelligible, then it is a proof, and if its premises are intelligible and acceptable, but the argument relies on postulates and accepted premises, then it is just a "dispute in the best manner" (*al-jidāl al-aḥsan*). However, if the premises are intelligible and unacceptable, then it is ineffective and unfruitful (Javadi Amoli 1375 Sh, 43).

## 5. Ambiguity in the Standard of a Successful Argument

As for the question, "What shall we take to be the characteristics of a 'successful' argument?" Oppy says that the answer is straightforward: "A good argument is one that succeeds—or perhaps would or ought to succeed—in bringing about reasonable belief revision in reasonable targets" (Oppy 2006, 10).

Therefore, in Oppy's view, the most successful argument would or ought to persuade *any* reasonable person to accept its conclusions. The question now is: Can such an argument be more successful than others? It seems that the success of an argument is a relative property, because an argument that convinces *any* reasonable person in accepting its conclusion and revisiting their beliefs is more successful than the one that only convinces *some* reasonable persons to accept its conclusion and change their opinions. Obviously, the success of an argument is hierarchical or graded; that is, "success" is a matter of degrees. Without presenting any arguments, Oppy suggests that a successful argument ought to persuade *all* reasonable persons to accept its conclusion (Oppy 2006, 1). In his discussion of the acceptability of *all* premises of an argument, he also asserts that "If a reasonable person need

not accept all of the premises of an argument, then that argument does not give all reasonable people a reason to accept its conclusion. If a reasonable person ought to accept all of the premises of an argument, then that argument cannot give any reasonable people a reason to accept its conclusion” (Oppy 2006, 11).

Such remarks by Oppy are very ambiguous, and some of his assertions seem obviously false. For example, he says that a person who is not rationally compelled to accept every premise of an argument has not been given any reason whatsoever to accept the conclusion, but is not this statement invalid? Is the person not obliged to accept every premise or is he obliged to withhold acceptance of some premises?

## **6. Rejection of Strong Rationalism**

Strong rationalism is compromised for the following reasons:

5.1. Many Muslim thinkers and philosophers maintain that the belief in God does not require complex philosophical arguments, and indeed, it is self-evident or nearly self-evident (Tabataba'i 2000, 1:395). Christian theists have also noted the same point, albeit in other ways. Plantinga believes that the belief in God is basic statement, or as he more particularly calls it, a properly basic belief. The belief does not justify itself based on other propositions, and no arguments for the existence of God are needed in order to justify the belief in the existence of God (Martin 1990, 268). He argues that the belief in God as a basic belief may nonetheless be open to contrary arguments (Plantinga 1983, 74). Religious people believe that the believer goes beyond what can be proved or rationally guaranteed, although this is accompanied by risks and uncertainties (Peterson et al., 1991, 35). Seeking God does not require an accurate measurement of evidence derived from human reason and conscience. Tillich believes that one can distinguish two ways of approaching God: that of overcoming estrangement and that of meeting a stranger. In the former, man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself, although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated. In the latter, man meets a stranger when he meets God. The meeting is accidental. Essentially, they do not belong to each other. They may become friends on a tentative and conjectural basis. Nevertheless, there is no certainty about the stranger man has met. He may disappear, and only probable statements can be made about his nature (Tillich 1959, 10).

5.2. As stated above, according to the Oppy's standard, a successful argument is one that ought to persuade all reasonable persons who change views about the matter. The question about this standard is this: Can it be made to work? That is, is it actually possible to do what the standard demands and show that a particular belief system is true in a way that should be convincing to any reasonable person? Some theists think that it is, and are prepared to show how it can be done. Against this claim, though, there is the undeniable fact that no one religious system shows any signs of being proved in a way that satisfies all reasonable persons. Finally, as a Muslim thinker, we can claim that some of our arguments are valid and ought to be convincing to anyone, but something has gone wrong in this particular case. Perhaps the other person simply has not studied the arguments carefully enough, or has not understood them correctly, or even may lack the intellectual capacity to understand them. For example, this would be true of most of us in the case of certain advanced arguments in mathematics. Finally, the other person may be blinded by prejudice, so that, even if he seems a reasonable fellow in most everyday situations, his prejudices simply do not allow him to see the truth in religious matters (Peterson et al., 1991, 36). The fact is that "reason" does not exist in human beings as a faculty that is neutral as regards conflicting worldviews. It seems clear in everyday life that people's worldviews do have a considerable impact on which sorts of arguments they find convincing and believable. Philosophers, such as Descartes, have tried hard to establish a totally pure and presuppositionless system. He started his philosophy from a methodic, universal doubt, but many contemporary philosophers seem convinced that this cannot be done.

5.3. An intellectual requirement regarding the provisions of a proposition is one thing, and rejection and reform of beliefs is something else. In Islamic logic, a proposition is called a "confirmation," because its subject and predicate intercommunicate with each other. The proposition "God exists" indicates the linkage between the subject and the predicate, and if one who believes in it and accepts the content of this proposition, then in addition to understanding the subject and the predicate, he links the content of this proposition to himself, and this statement becomes his belief. Acceptance of a proposition is a voluntary act; that is, the will separates the human soul from faith or belief, which is his arbitrary act, and hence, a reasonable person may not accept a clear statement after comprehending it. This suggests that the content of the proposition is not tied to the soul and is not believed by it (Javadi Amoli 2007, 20).

## **Conclusion**

Oppy himself is well aware that his standard for a successful argument is too general and ambiguous. In his previous works, there is much in his views that is not very clearly spelled out. Moreover, there is a confusion between ordinary and technical senses of “argument.” Now, when he talks about successful arguments, he means arguments from the common sense (agreed by all reasonable people), which rely on the rationality of the belief in God and strong rationalism, which cannot be made to work. We believe that it is possible to rationally criticize and evaluate religious belief-systems, but in contrast with the Oppy’s standard of successful arguments, we can say that this evaluation cannot be expected to result in a conclusive, universally convincing proof that some particular system is correct. However, it should not escape our notice that challenges posed by Oppy for the traditional arguments of the existence of God, such as ontological, cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments, as well as the problem of evil, are very important. Therefore, the study of his works for those who are interested in the field of theism and arguments for the existence of God is suggested. Theists cannot afford to ignore Oppy’s criticisms of their arguments.

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