
TOWARDS NICHOLAS EVERITT'S PROOF OF THE NON-EXISTENCE OF GOD

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Abstract

The subject of this article is the “proof for the non-existence of God” by the English thinker and atheist Nicholas Everitt and presented in his essay *How Benevolent is God? An Argument from Suffer to an Atheism*. Everitt himself calls his proof ‘irrefutable’. The starting point of the proof is the well-known definition of God as omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent in comparison to the existence of evil in this world. The main research problem of this article can be summarized in questions about the basis on which the English atheist presents his thesis and to what extent his reasoning is correct. One of possible ways to solve this problem is to formulate clearly Everitt’s premises and conclusions in order to find out where do they come from, and this is what the first part of the article concerns. This standardization shows that the key role in the proof and in its alleged indisputability is played by Everitt’s specific understanding of the definition of God mentioned here. The second part of the article indicates possible ways of argumentation against the discussed atheistic thesis.

Keywords: Everitt, proof, God, existence, Epicurean

1. Introduction

Nicholas Everitt is a retired lecturer of the University of East Anglia and an active lecturer at the Open University. He is known, among other things, as the author of *The Non-Existence of God*. The described author admitted that he started his education and his scientific career as a believer, and then slowly drifted towards atheism. He affirms that arguments for and against the existence of God ultimately help people to justify their own lifestyles and beliefs: “in order to seek what is Absolute, one must regard everything else as accidental” [1, p. 3]. In his essay *How Benevolent Is God? – An Argument from Suffering to Atheism* – included in *50 Voices of Disbelief. Why Are We Atheists* edited by Russell Blackford and Udo Schüklenk – Everitt acknowledged that, in the domain of law, while proof based on a comparison of probabilities is used in civil cases, “a proof beyond a reasonable doubt” is required in more important criminal cases. Then he went on to say that it is possible to prove beyond reasonable doubt that there is no God [2, p. 16]. Everitt regards his proof as

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confirmation of what he himself ‘instinctively believes’, and describes it as ‘logical’ [2, p. 22]. Therefore, one can ask the question on what basis the English atheist presents his thesis and to what extent his reasoning is correct?

In this article, I intend to recreate this “proof for the non-existence of God”, in order to examine its correctness, and then discuss the author’s ideas laying behind his thinking. This text seems to be a response to the content of one essay, but it is not so. Everitt’s proof seems to be a replication of so-called Epicurean syllogism against God’s existence and it represents an entire set of similar proofs. This article is to be a reference towards the certain way of thinking present in some atheists’ arguments. To achieve that purpose, i.e. to critically address Everitt’s non-theist thesis, it is necessary to follow the course of his reasoning. Therefore, I begin with a description of the state of the art of Everitt’s atheist thesis and the indisputable (in his opinion) proof of the non-existence of God. This proof seems to be a result of a certain philosophical interpretation of God’s definition held by the English atheist. By Everitt’s philosophical interpretation I will understand his way of thinking about God, including God’s definition and its reasonable consequences in reality. Any system that pretends to bring-out reasonable consequences has to have something in common with logic, at least on the level of conjunctions and on the way of drawing-out conclusions from premises. In view of the above, it is needed to standardize Everitt’s statements, and then to recreate his proof to examine its correctness. Personally, I believe that it is a logically correct argument. That is why in the discussion section, I endeavour to point out Everitt’s ideas that led him to construct spoken proof and the possible conclusions that a believer can draw from it; these will be, at the same time, possible strategies for defending the theistic thesis.

2. Case-studies

Before Everitt’s proof analysis, it is needed to choose a research method that allows anyone, through following its various steps, to carry out a similar analysis and personally verify the results. Everitt’s theoretical–cognitive position resonates with that presented by most theistic thinkers: first of all, he disavows agnosticism in the fideistic sense, expressed, for example, in Martin Luther’s statement: “Reason is the devil’s concubine”. The complete separation of rational–logical discourse from emotional–religious could lead a thinker to the trap of agnosticism. An agnostic fideist would claim that the deductions of theology make no sense, while an atheist would claim that they do make sense but, when taken as a whole, they lead to false conclusions [3, p. 28]. Everitt rejects the view that religious theses are irrational and illogical [4, p. 5-6], so theological discussion and arguments keep their value and thus they may be valid or invalid from the rational point of view. In order to reproduce and demonstrate the validity of Everitt’s proof, I will attempt to understand theology in Everitt’s sense, which I call his way of thinking about God (God’s definition, its consequences, etc.) and to understand this English Atheist’s philosophical interpretation of God’s definition. To achieve this aim, I decided to apply a certain level of standardization in the following which calls to mind a system of

natural deduction. Such a system consists in using declarative propositions of everyday, natural language but also putting a certain effort at two issues. Firstly, it is a correct applying of specified prefix 'not' and conjunctions, such as: 'and', 'or', 'if... to...', and 'if and only if'. Secondly it is deriving propositions named conclusions from another given propositions called premises [5, p. 28].

According to Everitt, in order to prove that theists are wrong, it would either be necessary to undermine the existing evidences for the existence of God – that are still being raised and analysed [6] – or to show at least one indisputable proof of God's non-existence. The author of *The Non-Existence of God* claims that there is no indisputable proof of God's existence because, if there were, it would convince all rational thinkers. For many atheists that statement is equal to end of any further discussion. However, some atheists (including Everitt himself) have decided to focus on providing supposedly irrefutable proof of God's non-existence, as it would be difficult to enumerate all the proofs and refute them one by one [2, p. 17]. This would involve demonstrating, by God's same definition, that the God cannot exist: the opposite of what occurs in the well-known ontological proof of the existence of God by St. Anselm of Canterbury recorded in his *Proslogion* [7, 2,c] where the existence of God is contained in His notion, or, in its semi-ontological Cartesian interpretation, where it is less of an insult to human reason to accept God as the cause of His idea than to accept the appearance of that idea out of nothing [8]. The ontological character is also carried by Avicenna's view, according to which existence is the essence of God and, so, it needs nothing else for its justification [9]. Quite a bit has already been written about the Anselmian ontological proof and its criticism by Gaunilon, Immanuel Kant, and many others. I would like to draw attention only to the apologetic work of Alvin Plantinga (*God and Other Minds*), which has also received some critical analysis [10]. I think that Everitt's proof was to be ontological at its starting point and it came out as containing an ontological or a priori part, that refers to justification of the existential thesis – negative in this case – flowing from the terminological analysis of the accepted definition of God [4, p. 15].

3. Results

3.1. Full form of Everitt's proof

Analysing the text of the English thinker, it should be noted that it is based on four theses (1-4): two premises and two of theirs consequences. The first premise is the aforementioned definition of God (1). Everitt wrote: "God is standardly defined in terms of a string of metaphysical properties: he is omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good" [2, p. 16]. These are the qualities attributed to God in the Bible, for example: God's omniscience: "Thine eyes have seen my deeds, and they are all written in Thy book; the days have been determined, though none have [yet] come" (Psalm 139:16); God's omnipotence: "For to God nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37); God's goodness: "For I know what thoughts I have of you" says the Lord, "thoughts of peace and not of misery, to woo your future and inspire you with hope" (Jer. 29:11), etc. God's

spoken attributes are all present in Judeo–Christian–Islamic tradition. Monotheistic theology attributes God’s qualities to him to a perfect degree and, therefore, either attributes or rejects all of them. This definition was not invented by Nicholas Everitt, but is widely known and readily cited as Epicurean. However, this poses some difficulty in quoting it, as Epicurus’ works have largely not survived. Epicurus was not an atheist, but he opposed the popular conception of gods or God. The definition first appeared and was attributed to Epicurus in Chapter XIII of Book VII of the *Divinae Institutiones*, entitled *De Ira Dei*, written by the Christian writer Lactantius. It was similarly cited by Pierre Bayle in 1702, in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. It was later referred to by David Hume in his work *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published in 1779, in Book X. Since then, it has appeared repeatedly, without reference to the source for obvious reasons. The second premise is the sentence stating the existence of all the evils of this world: “I believe, we can construct a more compelling line of argument for atheism by focusing on the existence of evil” (2) [2, p. 17]. This is Everitt’s second premise which is considered by him as an obvious one. The third thesis is the consequence of the definition of God, which states that God knows about the existence of evil, can deal with it, and wants to do so (3). Joseph M. Bocheński – well-known logician and religion’s theorist – claimed that such a consequence is accepted by theists. This is because, in the religious worldview, we are dealing with a set of logically ordered statements based on axioms [11, p. 252]. There must be also a fourth thesis – the most problematic one, as it does not exist in theology – which I will call here “Everitt’s philosophical interpretation of God’s definition”. It states that the non-existence of evil must follow from the fact of God’s threefold involvement in the world (4). Theses (3) and (4) were also noted by John Mackie, who also argued against the existence of God in his article “Evil and Omnipotence” [12, p. 208]. Nicholas Everitt never explicitly claimed this fourth thesis but, in my opinion, it can be derived from his further reasoning, which I will try to elaborate on in the discussion section. But then three other consequences could be pointed-out: *If God is omniscient and God is omnipotent and God is benevolent then there is no evil in this world* – let this one (5) be called “a consequence of God’s definition”, and: *If God is omniscient and God is omnipotent and God is benevolent then there is no evil in this world, and there is evil in this world* – let it be called “Everitt’s thesis of the contradiction of theology” (6). Finally: Everitt’s proof, formulated in his words, states: “If God is omniscient, he knows about the evil of the world; if he is omnipotent, he has the power to prevent the evil from occurring; and if he is perfectly good, he would wish to prevent all the evil. But there is evil, therefore there can be no God” (7) [2, p. 17], and since it is a substitution of logic’s law called *Modus Tollens* [13, p. 146-148], English Atheist would call this statement a proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

3.2. Analysis of Everitt’s proof

As everyone can see, according to Everitt, adopting God’s definition leads to a contradiction. However, what is meant here, is an external contradiction, reflecting the impossibility of reconciling one or more factors of the definition of

God with well-known and undeniable facts. In other words, it is possible to show that the world we live in – the so-called ‘actual world’ – is a counter-example to the accepted definition or to its conclusion. Alvin Plantinga calls such a contradiction ‘an implicit’ one, comparing to ‘an explicit’ internal contradiction [14, p. 38]. In my opinion, a target of Everitt’s proof is not same God’s definition, but any theology containing that such a definition. If the definition of God is contradictory implicitly, then the theology is contradictory explicitly, and this is the contradiction to be demonstrated.

After analysing the English atheist’s inquiry, it can be concluded that he cannot be wrong because a logical law guarantees the correctness of his ideas. But we have to remember that conjunction ‘if... then...’ comes from a system of natural deduction, which means that a complex proposition constructed with spoken conjunction is false when its antecedent is true and its consequence is false. In other three cases the proposition is true [13, p. 118]. So, the truth of natural deduction’s consequence not always comes from true premises. For example, there are propositions in the Bible, such as: “If Christ is not risen [...] vain is your faith” (1 Cor. 15:14), that are true and that truth comes from the laws of deduction neither from the antecedent nor from consequence, that are both regarded as false. Therefore, the statement that Everitt’s proof is a substitution of *Modus Tollens* logical law does not close the discussion yet, as truth or falsity may be assumed for particular theses. Assigning truth or falsity to these particular theses can be called their valuation. Since we have two theses in mind: *God is omniscient and God is omnipotent and God is benevolent* (1) and: *there is evil in this world* (2), four valuations are possible: they both can be true or they both can be false and the first one can be true and the second one can be false and reverse.

4. Discussion

4.1. Everitt’s understanding of God’s definition: God and evil cannot coexist

It is time to point out where thesis (4) – that is, Everitt’s interpretation of God’s definition – comes from. Everitt and other atheists must realize that it is difficult to both prove and disprove the truth of theological propositions, just as it is difficult to disprove propositions such as “the rook moves on the chessboard in a straight line” or “the bishop moves on the chessboard in a diagonal line”. Even if someone does not believe in the game of chess or does not like it, that ultimately does not give them the right to challenge its rules. One can only question a set of mutually contradictory rules. Stanislaw Lem talks about the whole Bible as a definition of God, and finds it flawed as it either contains mutually contradictory sentences or leads to contradictory conclusions [15, p. 277]. The non-contradictory nature of the theory is proved using the hereditary trait method or interpretation method, which involves the assignment of individual elements of a system to their parallel elements in another non-contradictory system, such as reality. The atheist aims to demonstrate that theology, as a contradictory system, has no interpretation in reality [3, p. 29]. It should be noted that the contradiction can be of two types: internal one and

external one [16, p. 56]. John Mackie wrote that “certain elements of the very core of theological doctrine contradict each other” [12, p. 200]. According to Everitt, a proof of such an internal contradiction is possible, but technically difficult, for the reason that it is technically difficult to take the whole of Revelation into account [2, p. 18]. The English Atheist seems to point out that it is not the Revelation that is an internal contradictory system but the theology, because theology contains the whole Revelation (including the three-omni definition of God) and many natural language propositions as well (including the obviously true proposition saying that evil does exist in this world). Since the Revelation is contradictory to the facts one can call it externally contradicted but if theology contains also some propositions declaring facts, then theology is an internally contradicted system. Such a system, does not have its interpretation in reality. When we call philosophy a set of propositions declaring facts, then any theological proposition contrary to the facts can be regarded as the one having a negative philosophical interpretation, and it can be considered a superstition in light of this philosophy. As long as a superstition is always irrational, someone who believes in it excludes themselves from reasonable thinking. But there are some possible solutions. Thinking about God contrary to objective facts could be, according to Alvin Plantinga, ‘positively irrational’ [17, p. 36] only, and therefore, not so much contradictory as incoherent, and thus, not completely out of logical possibility. Meanwhile, according to Bocheński (as well as Everitt), philosophy – by means of interpretation – serves theology precisely to remove ‘religious superstitions’, and incoherent thinking about God should be considered as such [18, p. 86-88].

Everitt considers that God’s definition may be philosophically interpreted either by the fact of human freedom or by the fact of evil. The problem of coexistence of three-omni God and human freedom was initiated by Aristotle’s question about the veracity of future contingent propositions [19, p. 15-16], and has lived to see many studies. Among the best-known is the one created by Robert Grosseteste. If God knows everything, he also knows the future, which makes human freedom an illusion [20, p. 27-28]. The theologian’s argument went in the direction of distinguishing two types of necessity: absolute and relative. The first is usually clear, and is accompanied by the laws of mathematics and logic. Here is an example of the second: When one leaves a greedy, disobedient, and hungry child alone in a room with a cookie on the table, you can say with a high degree of certainty that, at the present moment, you know that the child will eat the cookie in the near future. However, this does not invalidate the child’s free decision. This is why Everitt himself found the contradiction of the definition of God with respect to the fact of human free will not very convincing and, instead, leaned toward the second of the possibilities – the interpretation of God’s definition by the fact of evil’s existence [2, p. 18]. In turn, God’s definition may have a positive philosophical interpretation, when it leads to the proposition that states evil’s existence, or a negative one that leads to proposition that would state evil’s non-existence. And that is from Everitt’s thesis (4) comes from.

In view of the above, the philosophical interpretation of the problem of the existence of evil, adopted by at least some theologians, would be negative one in general; that is, it would state that, if God knows about the existence of evil, can prevent it, and wants to do so, then all the evil of the world does not exist. Meanwhile, according to Everitt, the existence of evil is an undeniable fact. Everitt himself believes that in the current world the existence of evil and his thesis about the contradiction of theology are both true, that leads to conclusion that the definition of God (1) should be rejected as false. However, the consequence of Everitt's philosophical interpretation of God's definition (5) to be true.

4.2. Possible answer towards Everitt's proof: evil excused

Regarding the other theologians who defend the definition of God while, at the same time, accepting the existence of evil, Everitt would pose the question: could such a God be justified? According to the English atheist, believers try to do so by invoking the truth of the faith, proclaiming that God sometimes allows for evil to bring about 'greater good'. Then, one could expand the definition of God to include another factor: "If God has a greater good to offer, then God allows evil". The philosophical interpretation of the problem of all the evil in this world would then have to be: "all the evil of this world exists if God knows about it, can counteract it, does not want it, and has reason to allow it". According to Everitt, a believer should be able to point to such 'greater good'. Some theists seem to take on this breakneck task and approach it in two ways. One group (let us call it 'group A') veils itself in agnosticism on the question of knowing this 'greater good'. The second group ('group W') believes that this 'greater good' is the freedom of human will. Even though Everitt considers this sort of agnosticism 'suspect', he respects the theists of the first group more, including Alvin Plantinga, than the theists of the second group: a man who parries "all the evils of this world" by remaining silent rather than making arguments is characterized by at least some 'moral sense' [2, p. 19]. However, recognizing that the good outweighing "all the evil of this world" must exist is itself based on the implicit assumption of God's existence. This has been written about by G. C. Chesterton when analysing the Book of Job: "God has refused to reveal his plans, which in itself [...] indicates that he has plans" [21, p. 36]. Only a person who has a loved one in their life, with respect to whom they have unlimited authority and trust, is able to explain to themselves that this person must have a good reason to allow great evil. The Catholic Church claims that God transcends all human knowledge and, therefore, a certain agnosticism is an essential component of faith (*Catechism of The Catholic Church*, 40-43) and faith presupposes complete trust in God (*Catechism of The Catholic Church*, 150). Alvin Plantinga defended the rationality of such agnosticism with respect to the aforementioned 'greater good' in reference to an example from everyday life: We, as humans, are unable to determine exactly how a person's mental (and, according to believers, spiritual) process of making a free decision precisely affects the movements of his muscles. Nevertheless, no reasonable person would question the causal

relationship that exists here [14, p. 39]. We find similar testimony in the Gospel, when Jesus allows his friend to die in order to bring him back to life (John 11:3-4).

The arguments of the English atheist against defenders of the theistic thesis from group W are difficult to refute. As for the argument permitting evil in the name of man's free will, it must be admitted that the good deeds of man, in order to have any significance, must assume that the man could have acted differently (i.e., wrongly). As man can act wrongly, then – at least in some cases – he does so. Moreover, many good phenomena, such as compassion, helping one's neighbour, and so on, would not exist if there were no evil. Such an argument does not satisfy Everitt. He gives two examples of evil that no reasonable subject can justify and these are: unpredictable catastrophes when multitudes of people are killed and parasites that bring about the pointless and cruel suffering of animals [2, p. 20]. The senselessness of evil in given examples is to be proof that there cannot be any reason for which a reasonable God would allow such evil. Then, the positive philosophical interpretation of God's definition must be rejected and the negative one (thesis (4)) must be assumed. In consequence, God's definition must be rejected. Keeping in mind that the existence of evil is certain, one must either reject God's definition itself (thesis (1)) or reject its philosophical interpretation (conclusion no. 5).

4.3. Possible answer towards Everitt's proof: world with evil

Regarding Everitt's proof, at least two answers can be given. First, one can ask whether the falsehood of a definition really presupposes the non-existence of the object it defines? Should we automatically question the existence of steering wheels if we say, for example, that "a steering wheel is a square wheel"? Creating a contradictory definition only undermines the existence of the object it defines when it is a designing definition; that is, when it itself constitutes the given object. Therefore, Everitt would be making a hidden assumption of the non-existence of God, similar to what he accuses agnostics from group A of.

Secondly, when one acknowledges existence of evil in this world, they describe real world from a human perspective only. Placing man (evil-recognizing creature) at the centre of the world is a theological proposition – or, at least, a humanist one – which is unpopular among contemporary atheists. For example, Richard Dawkins wrote about this in *The Selfish Gene*: "Even if it turns out that genes really cannot influence the formation of contemporary human behaviour, if we are really an exception among animals in this respect, it is still interesting to examine this principle from which we have so recently become an exception. And if our species is not as exceptional as we would like to think it is, examining this principle becomes all the more important" [22, p. 10]. Franz der Vaal wrote that we, as humans, are not qualitatively different from animals: "No one doubts the superiority of human intellect, but among the basic needs of man there are none that are not also present in our close relatives. Like us, monkeys struggle for power, derive pleasure from sex, crave security and tenderness, kill in fights for territory, and value trust and cooperation above

all. Yes, we have computers and airplanes, but our psychological nature remains that of a primate living in a herd" [23, p. 29]. Dawkins also stated: "With a little help from the imagination we can see the gene as a command centre managing a network of extended phenotypic influences spreading in all directions. And we can see any object existing in the world as the centre of a network where influences from many genes, from many organisms, converge. The far-reaching gene knows no limits. Throughout the length and breadth of the world, vectors run in all possible directions connecting genes with their phenotypic effects" [22, p. 198]. Jerzy Vetulani, a Polish neurobiologist, said in one of his online lectures that reasonable thinking is just a by-product of evolution, the purpose of which is to pass on a specific genotype. If we were to reject the Christian truth about the unique importance of man in the universe, how could we justify atheistic humanism, as today it is believed that the Earth without man would be a better world than the Earth with man? We, as humans, share with animals the unpleasant feeling of pain, just as we share with them the unpleasant feeling of hunger; however, both feelings are necessary for living beings. It is not without reason that people are treated for analgesia, which is a disease-related loss of the ability to feel pain. It is doubtful, however, whether we share with animals the reflection on the subject of suffering or evil. Moreover, we humans are the only ones who can and should humanize the suffering present in nature, such as predation. This fact recalls God's command from the Book of Genesis: "Subdue the earth" (Gen 1:28). There is also a place for Jesus Christ in the spoken world with evil, for Jesus who "had no grace or splendor" was "despised and rejected by men" (Is 53:3ff) and, thus, the accepted definition of God would not be true in his case.

4.4. Possible answer towards Everitt's proof: world without evil

Another possible answer says that the world with evil assumed and defended by Everitt should be compared with the world without evil theory, which is also present (although less noticed) in theology. Then, the definition of God leads to a world in which evil does not exist. Is it even allowed to speak of such a world? There are some groups of believers that consequently deny evil's existence or consider it as an illusion. In the biblical vision, especially the Old Testament, good and evil are secondary to what God gives: "We have received good from the hand of God; why can we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10b). Evil here does not have a moral form but, instead, a natural one, and what comes from the hand of God is always 'acceptable' and, therefore, is some kind of 'good'. Such 'good' from the hand of God is the punishment for the sin of the fathers on the sons (cf. Ex 34:7), or 'hardening Pharaoh's heart' (Ex 7:3-4), among other examples. Chesterton writes about contemporary readers of the Old Testament, that they do not understand its fundamental concept that "all people are instruments in the hand of a higher power". The idea of the Old Testament is that God uses people as he wishes for his purposes, just as he uses the elements of nature, and it is a great honour to be chosen by God as an instrument [21, p. 36-38]. Thus, world without evil is a world seen from God's point of view and includes either eternity, called by Christians the Kingdom of God, or the entire

universe (or, even, the multiverse), in comparison to which the evil that affects the inhabitants of the earth is insignificant. From this perspective, the fact of the existence or non-existence of not only evil but even our entire planet does not play a significant role in the multiverse.

Joseph Ratzinger, in his work *Eschatologie – Tod und ewiges Leben*, opposes the total denial of evil's existence. He speaks of two worlds that are in mutual relation instead. Therefore, he describes a world, in which the definition of God is true and well-understood, but the sentence proclaiming the existence of 'all the evil of this world' is not true. The world defended by Everitt, which undermines the definition of God, can be called 'a temporal world', while the world described by Ratzinger, in which the proposition proclaiming the existence of evil seems false while maintaining the truth of the definition of God, can be called 'an eternal world'. Ratzinger wrote about the Kingdom of God where, in a theological sense, there is no place for evil, as a reality that 'has already come' and is, in some way, present in our real world. The testimonies of the lives of citizens of the Kingdom of God (the 'eternal world') seem to confirm the questioning of the absoluteness of evil. Jesus, when slapped by a servant, reprimanded him (John 18:8) and, when nailed to the cross, he prayed for his executioners (Luke 23:34a). St. Lawrence, who lived in the third century, ordered his executioners to turn over on a hot gridiron. Of course, this is the voice of legend; however, in more recent times, eyewitnesses to the martyrdom of St. Andrew Bobola said that during torture he called on his executioners to convert and invoked the names of Jesus and Mary, while – according to eyewitnesses – seventy-old man was not supposed to endure such cruel torments at all (Pius XI, *Ex aperto Christi latere*, 359; Pius XII *Invicti Athletae Christi*, 325). The Jesuit martyrs from Japan did the same, until they abandoned public executions for that reason [24, p. 79-80]. Such evidence is also provided by the description of the martyrdom of Eleazar (2 Mac 6:18-31), the Brothers from the Book of Maccabees (2 Mac 7:1-42), and the martyrdom of St. Charles Lwanga of Uganda, who said to his persecutors that he enjoys cool bath while he was being thrown into a fiery furnace, or that of St. Maximilian Kolbe who sang Psalms in so-called 'starvation bunker' in Auschwitz Concentration Camp, just like St. Paul and Silas who were scourged and thrown into prison (cf. Acts 16:25). Not all physical pain – even if it is very great – is connected with suffering, as it is most often caused by emotional irritation and fear.

Ratzinger's world without evil would, therefore, not be the domain of the distant future but of the present, although in a hidden way: "It turns out that only one goal can suffice: liberation from the constraints of the world and history towards the equality of God" [25, p. 51]. Ratzinger thus sees the evolution of the world we live in from Everitt's world with evil to 'The Kingdom of God' (world without evil); in this way, these two worlds can somehow both be fulfilled in our reality. According to Joseph Ratzinger, these two worlds coexist in some way, and man – as a corporeal-spiritual being – participates in both of them. Ratzinger wrote: "The diastasis between the 'middle' [the times of Jesus] and the 'end' [the end of the times a time of 'Eternal Christ'] definitely belongs to the message of Jesus; the cosmic breakthrough and the coming of the Kingdom

of God no longer coincide. And in this diastasis is all our misery, it is the cause of impatience and embarrassment, it is actually a scandal. But did not Christ himself want to be a scandal?" [25, p. 50] Moreover, a specific existential space between the 'eternal' and 'temporal' worlds (which differ significantly from each other) is a place for the existence of man as a Christian who desires divinity and is right in this desire (Phil 2:5-11). This Ratzinger's approach seems to be shared by minority of theologians, but still, it is possible and present, and that makes this question about possibility of God and evil coexistence at least still open.

5. Conclusion

Nicholas Everitt – a self-declared atheist – presented, in his opinion, irrefutable and logical proof of the non-existence of God. This proof is to be a substitution of logical law Modus Tollens. One of its premisses is a popular and well-known definition which states that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good, just as in the argument against theists attributed to Epicurus. Another premise says that there exists evil in this world. Proof's consequence in turn is to be rejection of this definition of God. As I tried to point out, this rejection is brought about by an assumption that such a definition of God leads to the conclusion that 'all the evils of this world' do not exist. I called this assumption a Everitt's philosophical interpretation of God's definition. I also believe than many atheists understand God on that way. However, nowhere does Christian theology lead to such a conclusion, so the question arose as to where this thesis came from? In order to answer to that question, I attempted to recreate and to standardize to some extent Everitt's argument. The theology in this approach is the union of Revelation and some true propositions concerning a part of reality related to the field of religion. However, Revelation is to be a subject to philosophical interpretation that in turn is to examine theological theses with true statements about facts. According to Everitt, in such an interpretation, the theological God's definition leads to the statement saying that all evil in this world does not exist.

In response, a theist can point to other possible arguments. Most theists attempt to reconcile the definition of God with the existence of evil by introducing an additional (known or not) factor. Instead, I present the position of Joseph Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI) who, in his work on eschatology, describes the possibility of a world without evil. In the discussion section, I endeavour to present Ratzinger's position as competitive to the position of Everitt and most apologists. And that position makes this question about possibility of God and evil coexistence at least still open.

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