

ATHEISM AND ANTI-THEISM

Ruel F. Pepa

Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens (who passed away very recently) are dubbed by media as the four horsemen—or the four musketeers—of atheism. But are they really atheists? These guys whose lifetime obsession has been to discuss and write on the non-existence of deity we generally call god in the western context have been famous—and notorious to irate god believers—in their articulation of arguments and inferences on the impossibility of god's being. Their attacks are directed towards classic theological statements spelled out by theologians in publications, preached by priests and pastors on pulpits and aired by televangelists on TV, among others. The arguments of any of these four horsemen have been bitten to their delight by the public never initiated into the intricacies and complexities of issues that establish erudite theological formulations even of the basic type. In so doing, these so-called atheists have long been preoccupied with god-bashing activities which they consider to be so serious they have taken the task to be as important as a lifetime duty.

However, what I consider as a major problem with these guys is they have been talking and writing and issuing out dissenting notions and opinions in fiery and sarcastic manners to controvert, deride, insult, even abuse god-beliefs and even god-believers themselves. It is so absurd that they who don't believe in god's existence have been profusely talking and writing about the very god that they don't believe in. In the first place, they have nothing to prove considering the fact that technically in argumentation and debate, the burden of proof logically lies in those who affirm and not in those who negate a proposition. In other words, someone who is against say, proposition A, is an anti-A. Hence, if one is against the basic proposition of theism, then s/he is anti-theism and therefore, an antitheist. This issue brings us to a more focused discussion of whether anti-theism is tantamount to atheism in essence.

Atheism is non-belief in a deity (god) or deities (gods) while anti-theism is basically being against whatever belief anybody has in the being of a god or gods. In this sense, an atheist, to be

true to her/his being so, does not talk about something or someone absent or non-existent within the ambit of her/his consciousness. A true atheist is like anybody of us who cannot and does not talk about a “square circle” or a “round square” for this linguistic description does not and cannot be imagined and hence impossible to occupy a corner of the human mental space. Perhaps if someone (though not a normal thing) would start to talk about and defend the existence of a square circle, another would come out to talk this time of her/his opposition to such a belief. In this connection, we could hilariously call the latter an “anti-square-circlist” or an “anti-round-squarist” In the same vein, we say that there are those who talk and write in opposition to certain god-propositions because they are against the belief that god(s) exist(s). And we correctly call them ANTI-THEISTS.

Focusing our attention now on the atheist, s/he cannot talk against, much less oppose, propositions and statements about god’s existence because such is not within the scope and limits of her/his mental space. In other words, s/he cannot be for or against something or someone believed in by others of which the former is not conscious. THIS IS THE TRUE ATHEIST: someone who is non-argumentative on the issue of whether god(s) exist(s) or not because it is just purely and simply meaningless to her/him. In the final analysis, the four horsemen or musketeers—whatever people want to call them—are more accurately NOT atheists but ANTI-THEISTS.

© Ruel F. Pepa 2017

Email: ruelfpepa@gmail.com