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## Chapter 8

### Raelianism: What Is the ‘Central’ Raelian Argument for the Non-existence of God?

*Morgan Luck*

#### **Introduction**

In 1973 Claude Vorilhon, now known as Maitreya Rael, claimed to have met a member of the Elohim, an extraterrestrial race of beings that have reportedly been watching humanity since its beginning. Over the course of six consecutive days the extraterrestrial dictated to Rael a series of messages. These messages, and the story of Rael’s encounter, are collected together in his book *Intelligent Design: Message from the Designers*.<sup>1</sup> This book is part of the canon of the Raelian Movement (known as the ‘Messages’), a religion founded by Rael to help spread the Elohim’s message and, if the circumstances allow, prepare for their arrival. Within the book, it is reported that human life did not evolve, but was genetically engineered by the Elohim; that the Elohim were mistaken by humans as gods and served as the inspiration for many of the world’s religions; that within atoms are smaller ‘universes’, and that our own ‘universe’ is itself a building block of a larger one (and so on *ad infinitum*); that Rael is the half-brother of Jesus; and, perhaps most importantly, that there is no God. The aim of this paper is to analyse one of the Raelian arguments in support of this last claim.

#### **Why Should We Analyse the Raelian Claim That There Is No God?**

Consider the following claim reportedly made by the Elohim:

No argument aiming to support the existence of any type of god can be sustained when we glimpse, however briefly, at the infinite nature of the universe. (Rael, 2005, p. 164)

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<sup>1</sup> An electronic copy of this book can be downloaded from the following site: <http://www.rael.org/>

The argument supporting this claim has received little attention, if any, from philosophers of religion. This is most likely because such claims are, as George D. Chryssides (2003, p. 57) comments, ‘based on an exclusive revelation afforded to one single individual, Rael.’ Consequently, any arguments built upon such a foundation seem, *ipso facto*, shaky; and as a result, not worthy of further scrutiny. What is more, the fact that these revelations were reportedly provided by extraterrestrials seems to make people additionally wary. Yet, if we were to dismiss all religions that were initially built upon the testimony of a handful people claiming to be in contact with non-terrestrial life forms, there would be few left to engage with. The claim therefore, should not be disregarded on these grounds.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, much rests on the Raelian argument against the existence of God. If the argument is sound, then all theistic religions are proven false; a result that would establish it, at least within philosophy of religion, as important. Alternatively, if the argument proves to be unsound, this may, to some degree, undermine the confidence some of the 65,000 purported members of the Raelian Movement may have placed in the ability of the Elohim, and/or Rael, to construct good arguments of this kind. That there is such confidence is illustrated by one high-profile member of the Raelian Movement, Anthony Grey, who asserted that ‘the profound logic and rationality of what he [Rael] was told by his informants [the Elohim] appear unassailable to me’ (2005, p. xiv). Consequently, regardless of the result, an examination of this argument’s assailability is of no small concern.

### **Introducing the Main Argument**

Raelians claim that God’s non-existence follows from the universe having no centre, which in turn follows from the universe being infinite. Exactly how these inferences are made is what I

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<sup>2</sup> Many people may, upon hearing the Raelian argument, consider it to be obviously unconvincing, and so not worthy of further attention. However, there are various arguments within philosophy of religion, such as the ontological argument, that seem to many people obviously unconvincing, yet there still may be value in attempting to clearly demonstrate why.

shall attempt to formulate and analyse in this paper.<sup>3</sup> That such an argument is being offered is evident from the following three passages:

The universe being infinite, there can be no centre, which eliminates the possibility of the existence of all-powerful and omnipresent God! (Rael, 2005, pp. 239–40)

It is written in the messages that there is no God since the universe, being infinite in space, could have no centre.. (Rael, 2005, p. 245)

Yes, there is no ‘God’. The universe is infinite and therefore cannot have a centre by definition because of it being infinite. (Rael, 2005, p. 245)

From these three passages two separate arguments can be gleaned (where the conclusion of the first argument is a premise of the second):

*A: Against the universe’s centre*

1. The universe is spatially infinite in all directions.

Therefore,

2. The universe has no centre.

*B: Against God’s existence*

2. The universe has no centre.

Therefore,

3. God does not exist.

Let us begin by examining argument A, the argument against the universe’s centre.

#### **Argument A: Against the Universe’s Centre**

The validity of argument A requires us to modify it slightly with the addition of premise (4), and by stipulating the centre in question is special, that is, it has a unique spatial property. This modified argument would look as follows:

*A: Against the universe’s centre*

1. The universe is spatially infinite in all directions.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that I am not here attempting to analyse *all* the Raelian arguments for the non-existence of God.

4. If the universe is spatially infinite in all directions then it has no special centre.

Therefore,

2. The universe has no special centre.

Let us first consider premise (1): The universe is spatially infinite in all directions.

Raelians take (1) to be scientifically established by the Elohim (Rael, 2005, p. 164). For the sake of the argument, let us take its truth as read and instead turn our attention to (4): *If the universe is spatially infinite in all directions then it has no special centre.*

The truth of (4) seems to follow from the general notion of a special centre. It is arguably the case that a necessary condition of any central point is that such a point is located at a particular distance from the extremities of the thing it is central to. For example, the central point of a 6 cm straight line is located at a particular distance (in this case 3 cm) from both ends of the line. However, were a line infinite in both directions, it would have no extremities and so no central point. One might argue that all points on an infinite line are central, as, for any point, the length to one side of the point will be equal to that of the other – both being infinite. If one takes this approach however, there would be nothing special or unique about this spatial location, for it is true of every point. So there seems good reason to think that an infinite universe will have no special centre.

Since we are assuming for the sake of argument the truth of (1), (4) seems to be true given the nature of special centres, and the argument is valid. Let us grant the soundness of argument A and move now to an examination of B, the argument against God's existence.

#### **Argument B: Against God's Existence**

The validity of the argument B also relies upon us modifying it slightly by adding two extra premises, (5) and (6). This modified argument looks as follows:

*B: Against God's existence*

2. The universe has no centre.

5. If God exists, then God is located at the centre of the universe.

6. If God is located at the centre of the universe, then the universe has a centre.

Therefore,

3. God does not exist.

This argument is valid. In which case, since (2) is supported by argument A (which we are assuming to be sound), our full attention should now turn to the truth of propositions (5) and (6). (6) seems evidently true, given that nothing can be located somewhere that doesn't exist. In which case, all our attention should focus on (5) and the argument that is offered in its support. It should be noted that all the arguments that we shall be examining from this point on either directly or indirectly support (5). (As the structure of the various interrelated arguments introduced may prove at times hard to discern, I have included an argument diagram as an appendix at the end of this chapter.)

### **Argument C: For God's Central Location**

Premise (5) of argument B states: *If God exists then God is located at the centre of the universe.*

This proposition is supported by the following passage:

An infinite universe can have no middle, otherwise it would not be infinite. In such a universe, where would such a 'God' reside? It cannot be on the outer edge or in the center, because no such places exist in an infinite universe. Some people might say that 'God' is everywhere, but in an infinite universe, everywhere is a lot! (Rael, 2001, p. 80)

From this passage we can discern that the argument supporting (5) is one of elimination.

It can be formulated as follows:

*C: For God's central location*

7. If God exists, then either he is located at the centre of the universe, or he is located at the outer edge of the universe, or he is located everywhere in the universe.
8. God is not located at the outer edge of the universe.
9. God is not located everywhere in the universe.

Therefore,

5. If God exists, then God is located at the centre of the universe.

Yet why should we accept premise (7) – *If God exists, then either he is located at the centre of the universe, or he is located at the outer edge of the universe, or he is located everywhere in the universe?* Why can't God be in some arbitrary spatial location? Indeed, why does God have to be located in the universe at all? To account for such possibilities the argument for God's central location needs to be modified somewhat – (7) needs two extra disjuncts, and two additional premises, premise (10) and premise (11). This modified argument would be as follows:

*C: For God's central location*

7. If God exists, then either he is located at the centre of the universe, or he is located at the outer edge of the universe, or he is located everywhere in the universe, or he is located in some particular region of the universe, or he is located outside the universe.
8. God is not located at the outer edge of the universe.
9. God is not located everywhere in the universe.
10. God is not located in any particular region of the universe.
11. God is not located outside the universe.

Therefore,

5. If God exists, then God is located at the centre of the universe.

If, as we have granted for the sake of argument, the universe is indeed infinite, the truth of (8) is guaranteed, as a universe spatially infinite in all directions has no outer edges.

But what about (9), (10) and (11)? Let us first examine the arguments supporting (9), of which there are two.

#### **Argument D: Against God's Omnipresence**

Premise (9) of the argument for God's central location states that: *God is not located everywhere in the universe.*

There are two arguments for (9) given in the following passage:

To exist in the infinite number of infinitely small particles *ad infinitum*, while simultaneously existing in the infinite number of galaxies and universe of the infinitely large, and at the same time to be able to listen to all the prayers coming from other people populating other planets is totally unfeasible for any god – even if he is supernatural! In fact, if one is everywhere, one is nowhere in particular. And, if such a god wished to intervene in some specific place, he could not intervene anywhere else, since it is so difficult to do two things at the same time while simultaneously listening to an infinite number of prayers ... (Rael, 2001, p. 80)

The first argument follows from the claim that ‘if one is everywhere, one is nowhere in particular’ – this argument can be formulated as follows:

*D: Against God’s omnipresence*

12. Either God exists or God does not exist..
13. If God exists, then God is located somewhere in particular in the universe.
14. If God is located somewhere in particular in the universe, then God is not located everywhere in the universe.
15. If God does not exist then God is not located everywhere in the universe.

Therefore,

9. God is not located everywhere in the universe.

This is a valid argument, and premises (12) and (15) seem obviously true. Our attention, therefore, should turn to (13) and (14). Let us first consider premise (14).

Premise (14) states that: *If God is located somewhere in particular in the universe, then God is not located everywhere in the universe.* Another way stating this premise would be: *If God is located everywhere in the universe, then God is not located somewhere in particular in the universe.* Let us grant that (14) is true. Here is a reason to think so. It follows from the general rule that, if some y is present in all the locations of x, then y is not *wholly* present in a particular location of x; in other words, y would be nowhere *in particular* in respect to x. For example, if some rash was located everywhere on my body, then the rash would not be wholly

in any particular place on my body. However, unlike (14), the truth of (13) does not seem as evident.

Premise (13) states: *If God exists then God is located somewhere in particular in the universe*. But why must God be located somewhere in particular? Although it may be true that an omnipresent God is nowhere wholly in particular, it is unclear how this calls into question God's existence. For example, it does not follow from the fact that a rash may be everywhere on my body, that such a rash does not exist.<sup>4</sup> Without a further argument stipulating why something being located everywhere is mutually exclusive with its existence, it is hard to determine why it is that 'if one is everywhere, one is nowhere in particular' is a problem for the existence of an omnipresent God. Let us now consider the second argument for (9).

#### **Argument E: Against God's Omnipresence**

From the same passage that yielded argument D, a further argument can be drawn. This argument focuses on the claim that the ability to listen to an infinite number of prayers 'is totally unfeasible for any god'. This second argument for (9) can be formulated as follows:

*E: Against God's omnipresence*

16. If God is located everywhere in the universe then God can listen to an infinite number of prayers.

17. God cannot listen to an infinite number of prayers.

Therefore,

9. God is not located everywhere in the universe.

Let us begin by examining premise (16) of this argument. This premise states: *If God is located everywhere in the universe then he can listen to an infinite number of prayers*. Premise (16) does not seem to specifically relate to the possibility of God being everywhere; for presumably, even if God were located in one particular region of an infinite universe, he would still have to

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<sup>4</sup> It might be argued that since my body is not infinite the rash analogy does not hold. However, the same point can be made with a property that presumably the Raelians would take to be everywhere in the universe, such as gravity. Does the possibility that the force of gravity is present everywhere in the universe suggest gravity cannot exist?

listen to (or at least have knowledge of) an infinite number of prayers. The real concern, it seems, pertains to the possibility of God performing an infinite number of actions, rather than God being infinitely extended in space. That being said, I do not think any theist would want to deny that God *could* listen to an infinite number of prayers. In which case, this conditional will be true simply by virtue of its consequent being true (rather than because there is any necessary connection between infinite presence and infinite power). Accordingly, let us grant the truth of (16), and instead turn our attention to the second premise of the argument – (17).

Premise (17) states: *God cannot listen to an infinite number of prayers*. This premise seems to commit one to either constructing a ‘straw-god’ or holding quite a radical stance regarding logical possibility.

The ‘central’ Raelian argument against God’s existence is presumably intended to demonstrate the non-existence of the traditional God of theism.<sup>5</sup> In other words, it is intended to demonstrate the non-existence of an entity that is, at least partially, usually understood as being omnipotent. And an omnipotent agent, by definition, can cause any logically possible event to occur. However, unlike the act of creating a square circle, there seems nothing logically impossible (as opposed to merely physically impossible, unimaginable or difficult) about listening to an infinite number of prayers.

So, in order to support (17), one must argue either that it is logically impossible for God to be omnipotent, or that it is logically impossible to listen to an infinite number of prayers. Such objections may (and, at least in respect to omnipotence, do (Everitt, 2004, Ch. 14)) exist. However, they are far from evident within the Raelian ‘Messages’. Yet, even if such arguments can be presented, this would only eliminate the possibility of God’s omnipresence – another option for the theist is for God to transcend space-time. It is to this possibility that we shall now turn.

#### **Argument F: Against God’s Transcendence**

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, it targets the ‘existence of any type of god’.

Premise (11) of the argument for God's central location states that: *God is not located outside the universe*. This premise can be bolstered by calling upon a strong spatio-temporal account of existence. Fortunately, this is exactly what Rael seems to suggest when arguing for the infinite divisibility of the atom:

Everything has to be made up of something. It is impossible for something to be made up of nothing. If it were made up of nothing, it would exist nowhere, and so would not exist. To exist, it has to be somewhere. (Rael, 2001, p. 79)

The assertion 'to exist, it has to be somewhere' could be questioned were it interpreted too broadly. For example, many people take abstract entities, such as the number 2, to have some form of existence, despite the fact we do not expect to locate them in space-time. The traditional God of theism, however, is not considered to be an abstract entity. For one thing, God is considered to have causal powers – a property not commonly attributable to abstract entities. Therefore, this counter-example can be avoided if Rael's assertion were interpreted as follows: 'If a non-abstract entity, such as God, exists, then it has a spatiotemporal location.' Given that only things within the universe have a spatio-temporal location, it would then follow that God cannot be located outside the universe.

The argument being given here in support of (11), which we shall refer to as the argument against God's transcendence, can be formulated as follows:

*F: Against God's transcendence*

18. God is not abstract.

19. If God is not abstract then God is not located outside the universe.

Therefore,

11. God is not located outside the universe.

To assume the truth of (19) may beg the question. One cannot offer a convincing argument for the non-existence of a transcendental entity (that is, an entity located outside of the universe), such as the traditional God of theism, if one begins by assuming that such a God cannot be located outside the universe. This would be akin to trying to convince a Raelian that the Elohim

do not exist, based on the assumption that extraterrestrials do not exist. What is required is a further argument as to why all non-abstract entities must be spatio-temporally located.

Again I am not suggesting that such an argument is not forthcoming, only that it is far from evident within the Raelian ‘Messages’. Yet, even if such an argument can be presented, this would only eliminate the possibility of God’s transcendence – another option for the theist (one favoured by the Church of Latter-day Saints) is that God could be located in a particular spatio-temporal location. It is on this possibility that we shall now focus.

### **G: Against God’s Particular Location in Space**

Premise (10) of the argument C states that: *God is not located in a particular region of the universe*. Rael’s commitment to this assertion seems to be evidenced by a suggestion made in a chapter entitled ‘Space Exploration: Another Fatal Blow for the Myth of God’, which indicates that our inability to find God in space is an indication of God’s non-existence:

We have checked out the clouds (people go there everyday by plane), and so far no white-bearded ‘God’ has been seen sitting anywhere in them. We have even gone beyond the clouds to the moon, but still no white-bearded ‘God’ has been found. And now, our deep-spaced telescopes can see ever more distant parts of the universe, but there is still no white-bearded ‘God’ in sight.

(Rael, 2001, p. 79)

This argument here seems to be as follows:

*G: Against God’s particular location in space*

20. We have verified that God is not located in a number of regions of the universe.

21. If we have verified that God is not located in a number of regions of the universe, then God is not located in any particular region of the universe.

Therefore,

10. God is not located in any particular region of the universe.

This type of argument could be viewed as type of statistical generalization – which is a perfectly reasonable argument to employ in a number of contexts. For example, after drinking the fifth nice-tasting beer from a six-pack, one might assume, given this track record, that the sixth will

be similarly nice. However, here we are working with a finite number of objects (only six beers), whilst having already verified the taste of the majority of the beers (five of the six). In the case of God's location in the universe, the circumstances are somewhat different.

One may remember that when considering the argument against the universe's centre we granted, for the sake of argument, the truth of premise (1): *The universe is spatially infinite in all directions*. This is because Raelians believe (1) to be scientifically established by the Elohim (Rael, 2001, pp. 22, 164). If the universe is spatially infinite in all directions, then there are infinitely many spatio-temporal regions for God to be potentially located. In which case, providing the number of places we, and the Elohim, have failed to find God is finite, we could not claim to have already looked in the majority of places. In truth, any finite number over infinity is so close to zero (we might say it approaches zero) that the fact we haven't yet found God should be of little concern – we have hardly begun to look. What is more, surely the Raelians would not want us to conclude from the fact that our deep-space telescopes have not found evidence of an advanced alien race that no such race exists anywhere.

We may here be doing the Elohim an injustice. Perhaps they are so scientifically advanced as to be able to scan all the regions of the universe, and so are in a position to report to us that God is not to be found in any particular spatio-temporal region. In fact, let us grant that the Elohim have the technology to scan all the regions of the universe instantaneously. For if we don't presume this, and each region of the universe takes some finite amount of time to scan, the Elohim would never be able to claim they have scanned the whole universe, given that such an endeavour would take an infinite amount of time. Yet, if the Elohim do have the technology to scan all the regions of the universe instantaneously, then on what basis should we now believe premise (17) of the argument E: *God cannot listen to an infinite number of prayers*.

This premise was asserted on Rael's suggestion (2001, p. 164) that it is 'totally unfeasible for any god – even if he is supernatural' to listen to an infinite number of prayers. Yet, if it is unfeasible for a supernatural God to do this, should we really be willing to entertain that merely

natural beings (that is, the Elohim) could instantaneously look in an infinite number of places? It seems that the argument needed to verify that God is not spatio-temporally located (argument G) may be at odds with the argument needed to suggest God is not omnipresent (argument E).

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was not to defend the claim that God exists. Rather, it was an attempt to clearly formulate a particular Raelian argument for God's non-existence and determine to what extent the argument is convincing. I have attempted to suggest that the argument may fail to convince, unless further arguments are forthcoming. In particular, arguments are required to support the propositions (13), (17), (19) and (21); propositions which I take to be neither self-evidently true, nor argued for elsewhere in the Raelian 'Messages'.

In respect to (13), *If God exists then God is located somewhere in particular in the universe*, we need to know why God could not be omnipresent in an infinite universe. That is, an argument is needed to support Rael's claim that to be everywhere is to be nowhere. For surely the fact that my rash is everywhere on my body is not evidence that my rash does not exist.

In respect to (17), *God cannot listen to an infinite number of prayers*, we need to know why is it impossible for an omnipotent agent to listen to an infinite number of prayers – or, alternatively, why it is impossible for God to be omnipotent.

In respect to (19), *If God is not abstract then God is not located outside the universe*, we need to know why all concrete (or causally efficacious) entities, such as God, must exist spatiotemporally.

In respect to (21), *If we have verified that God is not located in a number of regions of the universe, then God is not located in any particular region of the universe*, we need to know why it is that verifying that God is not in a finite number of places is evidence of God not being located anywhere in an infinite universe.

Unless good answers to these questions are available, it may be rational not to be convinced by this particular argument for the non-existence of God.<sup>6</sup>

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### **Appendix**

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