

## John 1:1 Anarthrous Theos: The Big Lie of the NWT

"and the Word was God"

(John 1:1 [TR]) εν αρχη ην ο λογος και ο λογος ην προς τον θεον **και θεος ην ο λογος**

(John 1:1 [NIV]) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.**

The NWT renders it:

(John 1:1 [NWT]) In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was a god.*

**The argument given for using "a god" is:** Since **θεον** (in John 1:1b) is preceded by the definite article **τον**, it is translated "the God". And Since **θεος** (in John 1:1c) isn't preceded by a definite article (anarthrous), it is translated "a god", thus implying that the Word was a god.

**So, what should it be? "God" or "a god"?**

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### I) Brief introduction to *cases* in Greek

In English the words do not change according to their function in the sentence. So the word "God" as a subject, or a word used as a subject is in nominative case. While a word used as direct object and after some prepositions is in accusative case. In Greek, however, words used for objects (like **θεος** in John 1:1c). Even the definite article takes different forms according to its function in the sentence. So **θεος** and **θεον** are the same word, but the difference is due to the function of each word in the sentence. One is used as a subject and the other as an object.

**II) Let's examine the argument that anarthrous **θεος** (without a definite article, **θεος, θεον,...**) refers to "a god"**

**1-Actually reading John 1 in Greek, we find many uses of **θεος** without the definite article (like in John 1:6, 1:14, 1:18, 1:21, 1:24, 1:25, 1:26, 1:27, 1:28, 1:30, 1:33, 1:34, 1:35, 1:36, 1:37, 1:38, 1:39, 1:40, 1:41, 1:42, 1:43, 1:44, 1:45, 1:46, 1:47, 1:48, 1:49, 1:50, 1:51, 1:52, 1:53, 1:54, 1:55, 1:56, 1:57, 1:58, 1:59, 1:60, 1:61, 1:62, 1:63, 1:64, 1:65, 1:66, 1:67, 1:68, 1:69, 1:70, 1:71, 1:72, 1:73, 1:74, 1:75, 1:76, 1:77, 1:78, 1:79, 1:80, 1:81, 1:82, 1:83, 1:84, 1:85, 1:86, 1:87, 1:88, 1:89, 1:90, 1:91, 1:92, 1:93, 1:94, 1:95, 1:96, 1:97, 1:98, 1:99, 1:100, 1:101, 1:102, 1:103, 1:104, 1:105, 1:106, 1:107, 1:108, 1:109, 1:110, 1:111, 1:112, 1:113, 1:114, 1:115, 1:116, 1:117, 1:118, 1:119, 1:120, 1:121, 1:122, 1:123, 1:124, 1:125, 1:126, 1:127, 1:128, 1:129, 1:130, 1:131, 1:132, 1:133, 1:134, 1:135, 1:136, 1:137, 1:138, 1:139, 1:140, 1:141, 1:142, 1:143, 1:144, 1:145, 1:146, 1:147, 1:148, 1:149, 1:150, 1:151, 1:152, 1:153, 1:154, 1:155, 1:156, 1:157, 1:158, 1:159, 1:160, 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(John 1:18a [NIV]) No one has ever seen **God**

(John 1:18a [TR]) **θεον** ουδεις εωρακεν ποποτε

(John 1:18a [NWT]) No man has seen **God** at any time

We see that **θεον** (the accusative form of θεος) isn't preceded by a definite article (τον), and is translated God, even though it is meaningless. **So this is an "Anarthrous theos" referring to God.**

2-

(Nahum 1:2a [NIV]) **The LORD** is a jealous and avenging God

(Nahum 1:2a [LXX]) θεος ζηλωτης και εκδικων **κυριος**

(Nahum 1:2a [HiSB]) אֵל קַנּוּא וְנִקְמָה יְהוָה נִקְמָה יְהוָה

(Nahum 1:2a [NWT]) **Jehovah** is a God exacting exclusive devotion and taking vengeance

So here YHVH (יהוה) is θεος. **Which is anarthrous!!!**

3-

(Isaiah 37:16 [NIV]) O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over

(Isaiah 37:16 [LXX]) κυριε σαβαωθ ο θεος ισραηλ ο καθημενος επι των χειρουβιν συ θεος μονος ει πασης βασιλευ

(Isaiah 37:16 [HiSB]) אֵלֵינוּ יְהוָה יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבּוּב הַכְּרֻבִים אַתָּה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים לְבַדְּךָ לְכֹל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ אַתָּה עֹשֵׂת אֵת הַשְּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:

(Isaiah 37:16 [NWT]) "O Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, sitting upon the cherubs, you alone are the true God over the heavens and the earth.

Here, YHVH (LORD Almighty, O Jehovah) is θεος. **Again anarthrous!!!**

Note that συ means "you", it isn't an article.

4-

(Isaiah 41:4b [NIV]) I, the LORD--with the first of them and with the last--I am he."

(Isaiah 41:4b [LXX]) εγω θεος πρωτος και εις τα επερχομενα εγω ειμι

(Isaiah 41:4b [HiSB]) אֲנִי יְהוָה רִאשׁוֹן וְאֵת אֶחָדִים אֲנִי וְאֵת אֶחָדִים אֲנִי הוּא:

(Isaiah 41:4b [NWT]) "I, Jehovah, the First One; and with the last ones I am the same."

Here, YHVH (the LORD, Jehovah) is translated θεος. **Again anarthrous!!!**

5-

(Jeremiah 23:23 [NIV]) Am I only a God nearby, declares the LORD, "and not a God far away?"

(Jeremiah 23:23 [LXX]) θεος εγγιζων εγω ειμι λεγει κυριος και ουχι θεος πορρωθεν

(Jeremiah 23:23 [HiSB]) הֲאֵלֵנוּ מִקְרֵב אֲנִי נֹאמֵם יְהוָה וְלֹא אֵלֵנוּ מִרְחֹק:

(Jeremiah 23:23 [NWT]) "Am I a God nearby," is the utterance of Jehovah, "and not a God far away? "

Again, YHVH (the LORD, Jehovah) is θεος. **Again anarthrous!!! No definite article!!!**

6-

(Ezekiel 45:9 [NIV]) 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ...

(Ezekiel 45:9 [LXX]) ταδε λεγει κυριος θεος ...

(Ezekiel 45:9 [HiSB]) ...ה'ה' אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה

(Ezekiel 45:9 [NWT]) "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, ...

κυριος θεος (the Sovereign LORD) is **anarthrous!!!**

**Actually there are many other examples, but I think these examples are enough to show that Anarthrous translated "a god".**

**III) Let's examine the opposite:**

**Can "ο θεος" (with definite article) refer to "a god" and not "God"?**

1-

(2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV]) The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the

(2 Corinthians 4:4 [TR]) εν οις ο θεος του αιωνος τουτου ετυφλωσεν τα νοηματα των απιστων εις το μη αυγασσειν εικων του θεου

(2 Corinthians 4:4 [NWT]) among whom the god of this system of things has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, who is the image of God, might not shine through.

**Here, "the god", is ο θεος, with definite article.**

2-

(Isaiah 36:19 [NIV]) Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they

(Isaiah 36:19 [LXX]) που εστιν ο θεος αιμαθ και αρφαθ και που ο θεος της πολεως σεφαραιμ μη εδυναντο ρυσαι

(Isaiah 36:19 [NWT]) Where are the gods of Ha'math and Ar'pad? Where are the gods of Seph·ar·va'im? And h

Here again, ο θεος **with definite article** refers to gods.

**From these examples, we can see that , ο θεος ,with definite article, can refer to "god" and not "God".**

**I think so far we have destroyed the argument of the Anarthrous theos, or "a god"**

**IV) But why is θεος anarthrous in John 1:1c ?**

**From :**

[http://www.christiandefense.org/NWT.....1\\_article.htm](http://www.christiandefense.org/NWT.....1_article.htm)

Simply put, if John had written: *ho theos ēn ho logos* (lit., “the God was the Word” making *theos* definite), he would have indicated that “God” in 1:1b (the Father) and “God” in 1:1c (the Word) were the same (and surely not indefinite).

“Definite” nouns point to the specific identification of someone or something (thus, in 1:1b “the God” identifies someone or something [1]). The anarthrous *theos* indicates exactly as to what John was communicating: As to the specific identity, He was not identified as the Father, but personally distinct from Him: “The Word was **with** [p

[Footnote 1] Nouns generally fall under three semantic categories: **Definite** (identity), **Indefinite** (one of a class), and **Qualitative** (describing a quality). The anarthrous *theos* in John 1:1c is *qualitative*. As with the noun “flesh” in John 1:14: “The Word became flesh,” *theos* is *qualitative*—as to the Word’s new nature. Likewise, it would be most unnatural to translate “*ho theos agapē esō*” (tagging *agapē* [“love”] as indefinite) or “God is the love” (definite) “ο θεος αγαπη εστιν”. Here *agapē* is *qualitative*. A predicate nominative describes the class or category to which the subject (the “Word”) belongs—His *essence* or *nature*—not His personal identity.

Besides the blatant polytheism that an indefinite rendering of *theos* in 1:1c produces, there are two additional problems with placing *theos* \*first in the clause\* to *draw attention to it* as if he wanted the reader to shout out the word of emphasis (the word of many gods) all the more improbable. And second, John 1:1a (“In the beginning *was* [*ēn*] the Word”) indicates

The verb translated “was” (*ēn*) is an *imperfect* tense (from the verb *eimi*). An imperfect tense denotes an *on-going* or *no beginning*. And in verses 3, 6, and 10, the aorist verb *egeneto* (from *ginomai*), which *does denote a beginning*, is used of the Word to describe the Word’s **beginning through Him**” (v. 3) while the imperfect verb *ēnegeneto* is used of the Word to describe the Word’s **eternal existence**. “**The Word became [*egeneto*] flesh.**” (“was”) is used of the eternal Word. It is not until verse 14 that *egeneto* is used of the Word’s **beginning**: “**The Word became [*egeneto*] flesh.**”

We find the same verb contrast (eternal vs. origin) in John 8:58: “**Before Abraham was born** [*genesthai*], I Am” (born”) in 8:58 are from the same baseverb *ginomai* denoting a beginning. And *ēn* in 1:1 (“was”) is from *eimi* (“Am”) in those contexts. Thus, in 1:1 and 8:58 the contrast is clear: the Word’s eternal existence (*eimi*) vs. all things created (*ginomai*).

[Footnote 2] Of all the Greek prepositions that John could have used in 1:1b (such as *en*, *para*, *sun*, which all can mean “with” or “toward”). *Pros* (when persons are in view) signifies more than being near or beside. Rather, *pros* denotes *intimacy*. In 1:1b, *pros* expresses the inseparable communion and loving intercourse that the Word shared *with* the Father—*but not from*. *Pros* in 2 Cor. 5:8 (*pros ton ku*) has the same meaning: “*faith* has peace *pros ton theon* (lit., “with the God,” same rendering as John 1:1b). *Pros* in 1 Cor. 13:12, the double use of *pros* describes the “at home *with* [*pros*] the Lord.” And in 1 Cor. 13:12, the double use of *pros* describes the “*face*” (*prosōpon pros prosōpon*).

**Here's another detailed explanation from *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament***

**John 1:1** states: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. In the last part of the verse, θεός is anarthrous and comes before the verb. Therefore, it fits Colwell's *construction*, though it might not fit the rule (for context, not by the grammar). Whether it is indefinite, qualitative, or definite is the issue at hand.

#### ***a. Is Θεός in John 1:1c Indefinite?***

If θεός were indefinite, we would translate it “a god” (as is done in the *New World Translation* [NWT]). If so, this would suggest that the Word was merely a secondary god in a pantheon of deities.

**(Isaiah 43:10 [NIV])** You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you will say, **no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.**”

The grammatical argument that the PN here is indefinite is weak. Often, those who argue for such a view (in part because θεός is anarthrous). Yet they are inconsistent, as R. H. Countess pointed out:

In the New Testament there are 282 occurrences of the anarthrous θεός. At sixteen places NWT has either a god, or a deity, faithful to *their* translation principle only six percent of the time. ... The first section of John-1:1–18-furnishes a list of 11 verses 1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 18-and has the article only twice-verses 1, 2. Yet NWT six times translated “God,” once “a god,” and once “a deity.” If we expand the discussion to other anarthrous terms in the Johannine Prologue, we notice other inconsistencies. The *Translation* renders θεός as “a god” on the simplistic grounds that it lacks the article. This is surely an insufficient basis. That ἀρχῇ should be “a beginning” (1:1, 2), ζωῇ should be “a life” (1:4), παρὰ θεοῦ should be “from a god” (1:6). Yet none of these other anarthrous nouns is rendered with an indefinite article. One can only suspect strong theological bias.

According to Dixon's study, if θεός were *indefinite* in John 1:1, it would be the only anarthrous pre-verbal PN in the NT. This claim is somewhat overstated, the general point is valid: The indefinite notion is the most poorly attested for anarthrous pre-verbal PNs. This is improbable. Also, the context suggests that such is not likely, for the Word already existed in the beginning. The Logos could be “a god” according to John. Finally, the evangelist's own theology militates against this view, for Jesus Christ is identified as God (cf. 5:23; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28, etc.).

#### ***b. Is Θεός in John 1:1c Definite?***

Grammarians and exegetes since Colwell have taken θεός as definite in John 1:1c. However, their basis has usually been the rule to say that an anarthrous pre-verbal PN will usually be definite (rather than the converse). But Colwell's rule is the *context* which precedes a verb will usually be anarthrous. If we check the rule to see if it applies here, we would find it does. Therefore, if the same person being referred to there is called θεός in 1:1c, then in both places it is definite. Although the rule is qualitative, the evidence is not very compelling. The vast majority of *definite* anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nouns are none of which is true here, diminishing the likelihood of a definite θεός in John 1:1c.

Further, calling θεός in 1:1c definite is the same as saying that if it had followed the verb it would have had the article. The “Word” = “God” and “God” = “the Word”). The problem of this argument is that the θεός in 1:1b is the Father. The “Word was the *Father*.” This, as the older grammarians and exegetes pointed out, is embryonic Sabellianism or modalism.

modalism in the NT.

### *c. Is Θεός in John 1:1c Qualitative?*

The most likely candidate for θεός is qualitative. This is true both grammatically (for the largest proportion of pr theologically (both the theology of the Fourth Gospel and of the NT as a whole). There is a balance between the ἀρχῆ ... θεός ἦν [1:1], and his humanity, which was added later (σὰρξ ἐγένετο [1:14]). The grammatical structure of the Word, rather than his identity. But θεός was his nature from eternity (hence, εἰμὶ is used), while σὰρξ was

Such an option does not at all impugn the deity of Christ. Rather, it stresses that, although the person of Christ is translations are as follows: “What God was, the Word was” (NEB), or “the Word was divine” (a modified Moffa that can be applied *only* to true deity. However, in modern English, we use it with reference to angels, theologian translation. The *idea* of a qualitative θεός here is that the Word had all the attributes and qualities that “the God” though they differed in person. *The construction the evangelist chose to express this idea was the most **concise** w from the Father.*

## V) Conclusions

- 1. An anarthrous theos (θεος) can actually refer to God.**
- 2. Articled theos (ο θεος) does not always refer to God.**
- 3. θεος in John 1:1c is qualitative, not indefinite.**

(John 1:1 [TR]) ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν **καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος**

(John 1:1 [NIV]) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.**

**In the end, I'll leave you with my favorite translation of this verse:**

[John 1 Aramaic Bible in Plain English](#)

**(John 1:1)**

In the origin The Word had been existing, and That Word had been existing with God, **and That Word was him**