

Life Without God: The Implications of Atheism (part 1 of 5)

Description: No God equals no ultimate hope, value and purpose, and consequently no eternal and meaningful happiness. Part 1: No ultimate hope.

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Atheism is not an intellectual position that exists in a bubble. If its claims are true, then one would have to make some inevitable existential and logical conclusions that are very bleak. Under atheism, life is ludicrous. The following discussion may not provide a rational case for God, nor does it follow that God exists simply because life without God seems absurd. However, it does provide the fertile ground in which the rational arguments in this book take root.



Most atheists are philosophical naturalists who hold that there is no supernatural and everything in the universe can be explained in reference to physical processes. Atheism combined with philosophical naturalism is a recipe for existential disaster. The formula is simple: no God, which includes the associated concepts of Divine accountability, equals no ultimate hope, value and purpose. It also leads to no eternal and meaningful happiness.^[1] This conclusion is not an outdated religious cliché; it is a result of thinking rationally about the logical and existential implications of atheism.

No ultimate hope

Hope is defined as the feeling or expectation and desire for something to happen. We all hope for good lives, good health and a good job. Ultimately, we all hope for an immortal blissful existence. Life is such an amazing gift that no one really wants his or her conscious existence to end. Similarly, everyone desires that there will be some form of ultimate justice where wrongs are made right, and the relevant people will be held accountable. Significantly, if our lives are miserable, or experience pain and suffering, we hope for some peace, pleasure and ease. This is a reflection of the human spirit; we hope for light at the end of the dark tunnel, and if we have tranquillity and joy, we want to keep it that way.

Since atheism denies the Divine and the supernatural, it also rejects the concept of an afterlife. Without that, there can be no hope of pleasure following a life of pain. Therefore, the expectation for something positive to happen after our lives is lost. Under atheism we cannot expect any light at the end of the dark tunnel of our existence. Imagine you were born in the third world and spent your whole life in starvation and poverty. According to the atheist worldview, you are merely destined for death. Contrast

this with the Islamic perspective: all instances of suffering that happen in our lives are for some greater good. Therefore, in the larger scheme of things, no pain or suffering we undergo is meaningless. [God is aware of all our sufferings, and He will provide recompense](#). According to atheism, however, our pains are as meaningless as our pleasure. The immense sacrifices of the virtuous and the distress of the victim are falling dominoes in an indifferent world. They occur for no greater good and no higher purpose. There is no ultimate hope of an afterlife or any form of happiness. Even if we lived a life of pleasure and immense luxuries, most of us would inevitably be doomed to some form of evil fate or an incessant desire for more pleasure. The pessimist philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer aptly described the hopelessness and ill fate that awaits us:

"We are like lambs in a field, disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses out first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil fate may have presently in store for us" sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason... No little part of the torment of existence lies in this, that Time is continually pressing upon us, never letting us take breath, but always coming after us, like a taskmaster with a whip. If at any moment Time stays his hand, it is only when we are delivered over to the misery of boredom... In fact, the conviction that the world and man is something that had better not have been, is of a kind to fill us with indulgence towards one another. Nay, from this point of view, we might well consider the proper form of address to be, not *Monsieur, Sir, mein Herr*, but *my fellow-sufferer, Soci malorum, compagnon de miseres!*"[\[2\]](#)

The Qur'an alludes to this hopelessness. It argues that a believer cannot despair; there will always be hope, and hope is connected to God's mercy, and God's mercy will manifest itself in this life and the hereafter:

"Certainly no one despairs of God's Mercy, except the people who disbelieve." (Quran 12:87)

Under atheism, ultimate justice is an unachievable goal—a mirage in the desert of life. Since there is no afterlife, any expectation of people being held to account is futile. Consider Nazi Germany in the 1940s. An innocent Jewish lady who just saw her husband and children murdered in front of her has no hope for justice when she is waiting for her turn to be cast into the gas chamber. Although the Nazis were eventually defeated, this justice occurred *after* her death. Under atheism she is now nothing, just another rearrangement of matter, and you cannot give reprieve to something that is lifeless. Islam, however, gives everyone hope for pure Divine, ultimate justice. No one will be treated unfairly and everyone shall be taken to account:

"On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom's weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's weight of evil will see that." (Quran 99:6-8)

"God created the heavens and the Earth for a true purpose: to reward each soul according to its deeds. They will not be wronged."

(Quran 45:22)

Life, from the perspective of philosophical naturalism, is like a mother giving her child a toy and then taking it back for no reason. Life, without a doubt, is a wonderful gift. Yet any pleasure, joy and love we have experienced will be taken away from us and lost forever. Since the atheist denies the Divine and the hereafter, it means that the pleasures we have experienced in life will disappear. There is no hope of a continuation of happiness, pleasure, love and joy. However, under Islam, these positive experiences are enhanced and continued after our worldly life:

"They will have therein whatever they desire and We have more than that for them." (Quran 50:35)

"The people who lived a pious life will have a good reward and more...." (Quran 10:26)

"Verily, the dwellers of Paradise that Day, will be busy in joyful things... (It will be said to them): 'Salamun' (Peace be on you), a Word from the Lord, Most Merciful." (Quran 36:55-58)

Endnotes:

[1] Some of ideas in this chapter have been inspired by and adapted from Craig, W.L. The absurdity of life without god. Available at: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-absurdity-of-life-without-god> [Accessed 23rd November 2016].

[2] Schopenhauer, A. (2014). Studies in Pessimism: On the Sufferings of the World. [ebook] The University of Adelaide Library. Chapter 1. Available at: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/pessimism/chapter1.html> [Accessed 2nd October 2016].

Life Without God: The Implications of Atheism (Part 2 of 5)

Description: No God equals no ultimate hope, value and purpose, and consequently no eternal and meaningful happiness. Part 2: No ultimate value.

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No ultimate value

What is the difference between a human and a chocolate bunny? This is a serious question. According to many atheists who adopt a naturalistic



worldview, everything that exists is essentially a rearrangement of matter, or at least based on blind, non-conscious physical processes and causes.

If this is true, then does it really matter?

If I were to pick up a hammer and smash a chocolate bunny and then I did the same to myself, according to naturalism there would be no real difference. The pieces of chocolate and the pieces of my skull would just be rearrangements of the same stuff: cold, lifeless matter.

The typical response to this argument includes the following statements: "we have feelings", "we are alive", "we feel pain", "we have an identity" and "we're human!" According to naturalism these responses are still just reduced to rearrangements of matter, or to be more precise, neuro-chemical happenings in one's brain. In reality everything we feel, say or do can be reduced to the basic constituents of matter, or at least some type of physical process. Therefore, this sentimentalism is unjustified if one is an atheist, because everything, including feelings, emotions or even the sense of value, is just based on matter and cold physical processes and causes.

Returning to our original question: *What is the difference between a human being and a chocolate bunny?* The answer, according to the atheist perspective, is that there is no real difference. Any difference is just an illusion"there is no ultimate value. If everything is based on matter and prior physical causes and processes, then nothing has real value. Unless, of course, one argues that what matters is matter itself. Even if that were true, how could we appreciate the difference between one arrangement of matter and another? Could one argue that the more complex something is, the more value it has? But why would that be of any value? Remember, according to atheism nothing has been

purposefully designed or created. It is all based on cold, random and non-conscious physical processes and causes.

The good news is that the atheists who adopt this perspective do not follow through with the rational implications of their beliefs. If they did, it would be depressing. The reason that they attribute ultimate value to our existence is because their innate dispositions, which have been created by God, have an affinity to recognise God and the truth of our existence.

From an Islamic point of view God has placed an innate disposition within us to acknowledge our worth, and to [recognise fundamental moral and ethical truths](#). This disposition is called the *fitrah* in Islamic thought. Our claim of ultimate value is justified because God created us with a profound purpose, and preferred us to most of His creation. We have value because the One who created us has given us value.

"Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam... and favoured them far above most of Our creation." (Quran 17:70)

"Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose." (Quran 3:191)

Islam values the good and those who accept the truth. It contrasts those who obey God and thereby do good, and those who are defiantly disobedient, and thereby do evil:

"Then is one who was a believer like one who was defiantly disobedient? They are not equal." (Quran 32:18)

Since naturalism rejects the hereafter and any form of Divine justice, it rewards the criminal and the peacemaker with the same end: death. We all meet the same fate. So what ultimate value do the lives of Hitler or Martin Luther King Jr. really have? If their ends are the same, then what real value does atheism give us? Not much at all.

However, in Islam, the ultimate end of those who worship God and are compassionate, honest, just, kind and forgiving is contrasted with the end of those who persist with their evil. The abode of the good is eternal bliss and the abode of the evil is Divine alienation. This alienation is a consequence of consciously denying God's mercy and guidance, which inevitably results in spiritual anguish and torment. Clearly, Islam gives us ultimate value. However, under atheism, value cannot be rationally justified except as an illusion in our heads.

Despite the force of this argument, some atheists still object. One of their objections involves the following question: *Why does God give us ultimate value?* The answer is simple. God created and transcends the universe, and He has unlimited knowledge and wisdom. His names include The-Knowing and The-Wise. Therefore, what He values is universal and objective. Another way of looking at it is by understanding that God is the maximally perfect Being, which means He is free from any deficiency and flaw. Therefore, it follows that what He values will be objective and ultimate, because this objectivity is a feature of His perfection.

Another objection argues that even if we were to accept that God gives us ultimate value, it would still be subjective, as it would be subject to His perspective. This contention is premised on a misunderstanding of what subjectivity means. It applies to an individual's limited mind and/or feelings. However, God's perspective is based on unlimited knowledge and wisdom. He knows everything; we do not. The classical scholar Ibn Kathir states that God has the totality of wisdom and knowledge; we have its particulars. In other words: God has the picture, we merely have a pixel.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University, provides an apt summary of the concept of human rights and dignity"which ultimately refer to value"in the absence of God:

"Before speaking of human responsibilities or rights, one must answer the basic religious and philosophical question, 'What does it mean to be human?' In today's world everyone speaks of human rights and the sacred character of human life, and many secularists even claim that they are true champions of human rights as against those who accept various religious worldviews. But strangely enough, often those same champions of humanity believe that human beings are nothing more than evolved apes, who in turn evolved from lower life forms and ultimately from various compounds of molecules. If the human being is nothing but the result of 'blind forces' acting upon the original cosmic soup of molecules, then is not the very statement of the sacredness of human life intellectually meaningless and nothing but a hollow sentimental expression? Is not human dignity nothing more than a conveniently contrived notion without basis in reality? And if we are nothing but highly organized inanimate particles, what is the basis for claims to 'human rights'? These basic questions know no geographic boundaries and are asked by thinking people everywhere."[\[1\]](#)

We have value, but what value does the world have?

If I were to put you in a room with all your favourite games, gadgets, friends, loved ones, food and drink, but you knew that in five minutes you, the world and everything in it would be destroyed, what value would your possessions have? They wouldn't have any at all. However, what is five minutes or 657,000 hours (equivalent to 75 years)? It is mere time. Just because we may live for 75 years does not make a difference. In the atheist worldview it will all be destroyed and forgotten. This is also true for Islam. Everything will be annihilated. So in reality the world intrinsically has no value; it is ephemeral, transient and short-lived. Nonetheless, from an Islamic perspective the world has value because it is an abode for getting close to God, good deeds and worship, which lead to eternal paradise. So it is not all doom and gloom. We are not on a sinking ship. If we do the right thing, we can gain God's forgiveness and approval.

**"There is terrible punishment in the next life as well as forgiveness and approval from God; so race for your Lord's forgiveness...."
(Quran 57:2-21)**

Endnotes:

[1] Nasr, S. H. (2004). The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, p. 275.

Life Without God: The Implications of Atheism (Part 3 of 5)

Description: No God equals no ultimate hope, value and purpose, and consequently no eternal and meaningful happiness. Part 3: No ultimate purpose.

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No ultimate purpose

"I do not know why we are here, but I'm pretty sure that it is not in order to enjoy ourselves."