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Two questions for Atheists

by Dennis Prager

*Of the 25 Most Influential Living Atheists as listed at SuperScholar.org., I have had the privilege of debating five of the top seven. Recently, however, I realized that I never asked any of them two questions that I would now ask before any other:*

*1. Do you hope you are right or wrong?*

*2. Do you ever doubt your atheism?*

*The answers to those questions would tell me what I would most like to know about the person: how intellectually honest he is, and what motivates him. To be sure, the answers to those two questions neither validate nor invalidate any atheist arguments. Atheist and theist arguments rise and fall on their merits,*

Dennis, theist arguments do not have merits. The fact that theists believe that they do, only shows how powerful delusion can be.

Also, you do not understand what atheism is. Atheism does not have arguments. It is nothing more than a rejection of theistic claims. No argument is necessary to reject a claim that does not rest on evidence ... but only on faith.

Dennis your position rests on the logical fallacy of trying to "Switch The Burden Of Proof." A position based on a logical fallacy needs no refutation because it refutes itself.

*... But on a purely human level, their answers would enable me to understand the atheist as a person and as a thinker. Take the first question: Do you hope you are right or wrong?*

*I respect atheists who answer that they hope they are wrong.*

Dennis, I don't think anyone who is reading your essay believes, that if you were asked about your belief in God "Do you hope you are right or wrong?" that you would say that you hoped you were wrong. Do you agree?

(Yes sports fans - he *has* to agree)

So using your own standards ... you have just set yourself on fire.

*It tells me that they understand the terrible consequences of atheism*

Dennis, the terrible consequences of atheism are the threats, discrimination, violence, and murder that have resulted when Ghost Worshipers found out that someone was an atheist.

*that all existence is random*

Dennis, obviously science isn't your strong suit. While randomness does exist, that does not mean that all existence is random. Much of existence is dictated by well-understood laws of chemistry and physics; most of which are quite deterministic.

*that there is no ultimate meaning to life*

Dennis, that all depends on what you mean by "ultimate." Raising children, enjoying art, music, and science, and helping friends, can all bring deep meaning to life.

Invisible ghosts are not necessary for that scenario.

*that there is no objective morality — right and wrong are subjective personal or societal constructs*

Dennis, the objective morality of the Bible that you are trying to pawn off on us is the most vile set of rules and morals ever recorded at any time in history and at any place on Earth. If you can produce evidence of a more disgusting, inhuman set of laws, I would be more than happy to examine them.

But a word of warning Dennis, you are going to have to dig really deep to find a code that endorses and brags about slavery, genital mutilation, genocide, infanticide, and cannibalism; just to name a few of the horrors endorsed in your "moral code."

*that when we die, there is nothing but eternal oblivion, meaning, among other things, that one is never reconnected with any loved ones*

Dennis, you have the mind of a frightened little child.

You've already been dead once - for almost 14 billion years. Wasn't all that bad was it?

And no Dennis, there is no evidence that you are ever going to see Bubbles again. Seriously Dennis, you need to grow up.

*and there is no ultimate justice in the universe — murderers, torturers and their victims have identical fates: nothing.*

Dennis, you just hit on why it is so important to focus on this life, rather than betting all your marbles on a fantasy that may or may not come true.

*Anyone who would want all those things*

Dennis, it is irrelevant what we want. What we are discussing is reality - not the fantasy world you want to believe you live in.

*has either not considered the consequences of atheism*

Dennis, the consequences of atheism (in addition to the horrors from violent Christians that I listed earlier) include understanding a reality supported by the evidence of science - not faith in a reality asserted by ignorant, ancient goat herders.

*or has what seems like an emotionally detached outlook on life.*

Dennis, how did you conclude that atheists are emotionally detached? Do you have any evidence to support that assertion?

No. You don't. It is simply what you desperately want to be true.

*A person who doesn’t want there to be ultimate meaning to existence, or good and evil to have an objective reality, or to be reunited with loved ones, or the bad punished and the good rewarded has a rather cold soul.*

Dennis, there is no evidence for anything called a "soul"; cold or otherwise.

And hurling childish insults at people who don't share your belief in an evil, invisible ghost is probably not the best way to represent your religion to rational people, who are already having a difficult time suppressing their laughter at your childish, intolerant beliefs.

*That’s why I suspect atheists who think that way have not fully thought through their atheism.*

Dennis, atheists don't think through atheism - they think through religious claims. Atheists are those who, when they read stories about the sun freezing in the sky for a whole day, or the multi-headed, fire-breathing dragon who lives in the ocean, come to the conclusion that the Bible might not be the most reliable source of information.

Ah, but you believe in those things, don't you Dennis?

If the Bible is the divinely-inspired word of God as Christians and Jews believe, then you must believe it, huh?

Like I said before Dennis ... the mind of a frightened little child.

*This is especially so for those who allege that their atheism is primarily because of their conclusion that there is too much unjust human suffering for there to be a God.*

Dennis, that is one argument that neither you, nor any other believer, has ever been able to handle. That is why you just singled out those atheists for special treatment. That is why you must try to dismiss it and quickly move to other topics.

Any omnipotent God who would create a world full of suffering, such as this one, could only be described as an inhuman monster.

And Dennis, you don't just believe in Him, you actually worship that hideous monster.

How fucking sick is that?

*If that is what has led you to your atheism, how could you possibly not hope there is a God?*

Dennis, I might be persuaded to hope there is a God, but, it certainly wouldn't be the monster described in your Bible.

You know, the Guy who murdered countless innocent Egyptian babies and then created a holiday (Passover) to celebrate the slaughter.

How sick is that?

*Precisely because you are so disturbed by the amount of suffering in the world, wouldn’t you want a just God to exist?*

Dennis, I thought you Conservatives were real big on personal responsibility?

Now you want a magical Sky Daddy to fix everything for you.

See the contradiction there, Dennis?

*Now to the second question: Do you ever doubt your atheism?*

Not any more Dennis. Religion has had thousands of years to produce evidence, and despite countless efforts by countless faithful believers, they came up empty ... every single time.

I'm about as sure that religion is man-made bunk, as I am that, gravity will cause me serious regrets, should I dare to challenge it from the roof of my house.

*A few years ago, the largest atheist organization in the United States, American Atheists, to its credit, invited me to Minneapolis to debate the head of the organization at its annual meeting. At one point, I looked at the audience and asked people to raise their hands if they ever doubted their atheism. Not one hand went up. I found this interesting, if not disturbing, and said so.*

Dennis, that's probably because you realized that, at that point, your goose was cooked. These people were confident in their rejection of religious hogwash, and were not going to be fooled by your dishonest Christian apologetic propaganda.

*Nonreligious individuals often accuse religious believers of not challenging themselves.*

Dennis, there is a good reason why believers do not challenge their own beliefs. They believe that if they lose their faith, the punishment will be eternal torture as threatened in the Bible. Religion has always relied on fear for its success; and if fear doesn't work, the next step is terrorism. Science, on the other hand, does not threaten them, so they have no need to fear it.

Even people as well-educated as you Dennis, are not immune to this threat. That's because it isn't a matter of intelligence - it is a matter of courage; and Dennis ... you have failed spectacularly.

*And, depending on the religion and on the individual, that is often the case. Yet it would seem that believers challenge themselves more than atheists do.*

Dennis, atheists have already faced the challenge and won. Nearly all of today's atheists began as believers. After finding the courage to face Pascal's Wager and defeat it, there is no longer a need to face the same challenge. Believers probably do challenge themselves more. Unfortunately, most of them fail that challenge.

*As I explained at the debate, I never met a believer who hadn’t at some point had doubts about God.*

Dennis, the multi-headed, fire-breathing dragon who lived in the sea should give anyone doubts. The fact that so many still believe, is a testimony to the power of the threats from the spirit world.

*When experiencing, seeing or reading about terrible human suffering, all of us who believe in God have on occasion doubted our faith.*

Dennis, that should have freed you from your faith. But until you find the courage to face the threats from your horrible monster, and defeat them, you will continue to live out your miserable life, being terrorized by an invisible ghost.

Dennis, a worm has a better existence than you do.

*So, I asked the atheists, how is it that when you see a baby born or a spectacular sunset, or hear a Mozart symphony, or read about the infinite complexity of the human brain — none of these has ever prompted you to wonder whether there really might be a God?*

*I remember sensing that I had a struck a nerve.*

Dennis, that is called ... wishful thinking.

What they were more likely thinking was, how could you ask such a stupid question.

*So, then, while I still debate God’s existence with atheists, I do so in order that the audience will hear sound arguments for God’s existence.*

Dennis, name one.

And if Mozart is the best you've got ... then you can save your breath.

*But what really interests me — and I think should interest any believer or atheist — are the answers to these two questions. Because only if the atheist responds, “I hope I am wrong” and “Yes, there have been occasions when I have wondered whether there really might be a God” — do I believe that I have encountered an individual who has really thought through his or her atheism.*

Dennis, as I stated previously, we do not think through atheism, we think through religious claims. That is how we arrive at atheism.

*I also believe that I have probably met a truly decent person. But a sad one.*

Dennis, you couldn't even begin to understand the freedom and happiness that people experience when they throw away the fear of invisible angry ghosts; when they lose the terror of Hell; and the anxiety of being constantly monitored and judged.

When they embrace reality through science, a whole new world of wonder opens up to them.

But these are things you will likely never know Dennis ...

and *that* is what is really sad.

*For to know how awful the consequences of atheism are and still be convinced that there is no God is an unhappy fate indeed.*

Dennis, it is probably better that you remain in your delusional state, because if you ever realized that your entire life has been pissed down the toilet because you chose to put your faith in the writings of ancient, ignorant shepherds who couldn't figure out where the sun went at night ... you would probably kill yourself.

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Lifespan of mice extended by as much as 35 percent

with no adverse effects

Cellular senescence is a biological mechanism that functions as an 'emergency brake' used by damaged cells to stop dividing. While halting cell division of these cells is important for cancer prevention, it has been theorized that once the 'emergency brake' has been pulled, these cells are no longer necessary.

Researchers have shown that senescent cells (cells that no longer divide) accumulate with age and negatively impact health and shorten lifespan by as much as 35 percent in normal mice. The results demonstrate that clearance of senescent cells delays tumor formation, preserves tissue and organ function, and extends lifespan without observed adverse effects.

The immune system sweeps out the senescent cells on a regular basis, but over time becomes less effective. Senescent cells produce factors that damage adjacent cells and cause chronic inflammation, which is closely associated with frailty and age-related diseases.

Researchers used a transgene that allowed for the drug-induced elimination of senescent cells from normal mice. Upon administration of a compound called AP20187, removal of senescent cells delayed the formation of tumors and reduced age-related deterioration of several organs. Median lifespan of treated mice was extended by 17 to 35 percent. They also demonstrated a healthier appearance and a reduced amount of inflammation in fat, muscle, and kidney tissue.

The advantage of targeting senescent cells is that clearance of just 60-70 percent can have significant therapeutic effects. If translatable, because senescent cells do not proliferate rapidly, a drug could efficiently and quickly eliminate enough of them to have profound impacts on lifespan and overall health.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

Anonymous

"Humanity's first sin was faith;

its first virtue was doubt"