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Discussion with Atheists on YouTube - Part 1

By Freddy Davis

Each month I produce a video where I talk about some practical expression of worldview beliefs. Periodically, I specifically do something on Atheism – which generally brings militant Atheists out of the woodwork. Recently I did one called Most Atheists Honestly Don't Get It (You can view it for yourself at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtQ4gETT25w>). And, predictably, I got a lot of response from it. Below are three of the conversations that emerged from the video (These are not all, and I will share more next time.)

As you are probably aware, Atheism is a religious belief that affirms God does not exist. Interestingly, many Atheists don't like that definition and will argue about how to define their beliefs. Beyond that, many get upset that I even refer to it as a religious belief. As you read below, you should get some insights into the way many Atheists think about this topic. And hopefully, this will give you additional insights into how you, yourself, can penetrate their beliefs in order to share the gospel when you have occasion to interact with them.

Of course, believers in Atheism, as with believers in every other religious tradition, come in a variety of forms. There are many who are very courteous and will dialog with a respectful attitude. On the other hand, there are many who are militant zealots who are anything but respectful. Interestingly, most who choose to attack my videos tend to be of the more militant variety.

In interacting with people from other faiths, I have found that you have to deal with them on the

basis of their own personal paradigm. It is possible to hold a respectful dialog with those who are respectful, but often requires that one become a bit more confrontational with those who are not. Please understand, though, that while it is sometimes necessary to be confrontational, that is not a license to act in a hateful way. It is always important to not allow own's own attitude to become unchristlike. Here are three dialogs.

Bad Art

Hi Freddy,

This hypothetical might help you to understand the term atheism:

A guy comes up to me and says that he believes there is a god.

I tell him that's cool, but I'm just not convinced there is a god.

We each turn and walk away going about living our lives.

There is no "very foundation of atheism", but instead it's merely a nonbelief. The generalization that we are like evangelists, well that would only apply if we were knocking on your door and telling you not to believe in god, or yelling at people on the streets. Do you actually see that happening?

One more thing do you really think atheism is a religion? That's like saying that inertia is a sport.

You are very fervent in your belief. I get that. That's fine.

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Freddy Davis

Art, actually, Atheism is not merely non-belief. There is no such thing as "non-belief." Everyone believes something. Atheism is a positive assertion that God does not exist. A positive assertion like that is a belief. So yes, it is a religion, as it is a faith expression. That belief is an expression of a naturalistic worldview. And just because you don't go knocking on doors does not set aside the act of evangelism. Evangelism is merely asserting one's beliefs to nonbelievers, and can be done in a myriad of ways -- like telling other people on YouTube that their beliefs are wrong.

Bad Art

@Freddy Davis - I believe in things -- yes. When something is demonstrated sufficiently, then I would give it a degree of believability. Regarding gods -- I haven't heard a convincing argument yet, so by definition, I am an atheist. That is, I don't believe in a god. There may be some atheists who would assert "God does not exist." He / she would be an atheist too. I've heard the term hard atheist (wish there were a better term), otherwise, a person like me who does not know and does not believe in a god would be an agnostic atheist. So that's a religion? Umm.....sorry, but no.

Freddy Davis

@Bad Art - So what would be required for you to consider something sufficiently demonstrated? I can give all the evidence in the world, but if you are not willing to consider it valid, it is a meaningless exercise. Okay, you don't believe in God but you do believe in something that you have to accept equally by faith. What is it that you do believe?

Bad Art

@Freddy Davis - Interesting question, which I will answer. But I

wasn't sure whether we have put to rest the misconception that atheism is a religion.

Freddy Davis

@Bad Art - Seemingly not. Your implication is that you don't yet recognize that fact.

Bad Art

@Freddy Davis - not a fact.
Atheism = lack of belief in gods.

Atheism is not a religion.

Likewise:

Transparency is not a color.

Silence is not a musical opus.

Naked is not a clothing style.

Perhaps my failure to communicate has led us toward a roadblock.

Freddy Davis

@Bad Art

a - from the Greek, meaning no or not
theos - from the Greek, meaning God
Put them together and you get Atheism - the affirmative belief that there is no God.

Now, if you say that is not your belief, then you are not an Atheist, but hold some other form of naturalistic faith. Perhaps you would like to clarify. So how do you distinguish a "lack of belief in gods" and "a belief that God does not exist?" It seems to me you are making a distinction without a distinction.

Transparency is not a color - but no one said it was. That is a false equivalence.

Silence is not a musical opus, but a musical opus will inevitably contain moments of silence.

Naked is not a clothing style - another false equivalence.

Atheism is an expression of Naturalism - which is, by definition, atheistic.

The problem is not your failure to communicate, but your inability to make certain logical connections.

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[Note: At this point, Bad Art chose not to continue the conversation.]

Absque Religione (This is not a person's name, but means "Without Religion" in Latin.)

Why is always: We have all kind of evidence (but we are not going to tell you)?

Freddy Davis

That characterization is simply not true. There are all kinds of people out there sharing the evidence. Perhaps you just never look in the places it is being shared.

Absque Religione

@Freddy Davis - There are all kind of apologists out there making baseless claims, that's true. What has never happened is that they could make an actual convincing case FOR god (that's why we still have this discussion).

- Most (maybe all) of those arguments are flawed in the same way. They presuppose a god. This makes the argument useless.

- So please humor me. Since you have so much evidence, show me your best evidence FOR the existence of your god please.

- I predict that I will find a video within no time, that explains why the argument does not work. But you can try to prove me wrong of course

Freddy Davis

@Absque Religione - Of course you can find a video in no time that proposes a reason why virtually any argument does not work. You can do that because that person would be using argumentation that is based on an entirely different set of worldview presuppositions. However, for that argument to be valid, it would also have to demonstrate that the presuppositions its argument is based upon is objectively true - which is impossible. Every approach to logic is based

on some set of worldview presuppositions. The question is, "Can you demonstrate that the presuppositions to the logic is actually true?" You can only assert that someone else's claims are baseless if you can demonstrate that your argument represents objective truth. Something that you will never be able to do.

As for making an actual convincing case FOR God, there are a lot of them out there. The fact that you are not willing to accept any of them is meaningless unless you can demonstrate some other belief is true. So, I eagerly await your proof.

Absque Religione

@Freddy Davis - Why do theists always use so many words to explain why we won't agree with them?

- Why not give me your best evidence instead of all these distractions.

- Oh, and just for fun. Do you think atheism is a worldview?

Freddy Davis

@Absque Religione - Atheism is not a worldview. It is a belief system that is an expression of a naturalistic worldview.

Let me ask you a question: If I give you what I consider great evidence for the existence of God and you don't believe what I say, would you consider it great evidence? The problem with responding the way you want me to respond is that because you consider my worldview beliefs to be a fantasy, you will dismiss my evidence as not being real. Simply leaving it at that will never accomplish anything. So, what I have done is to explain the nature of worldview beliefs so you can at least grasp the reason why we do not see eye-to-eye on this. I will make a deal with you, though. You give me proof that your worldview beliefs are true and can legitimately judge my beliefs, and I will indulge your desire.

Absque Religione

@Freddy Davis

- Mistake 1: Atheism is not a belief system. It is a disbelief. How is a disbelief a belief????
- Mistake 2: Atheism is not a position on materialism. Atheism is just one position on one claim. how can you not know this? Not all atheists are materialists you dummy.
- Mistake 3: Evidence is not dependent on your worldview. Evidence does not care if you consider it good or bad. It does not care if you believe in it or not. And logic does not change with your worldview. That really is the dumbest thing you have said so far. <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-logic.html>
- Here is a definition: Evidence is an available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.
- You don't get to create your own 'evidence' system.
- Your beliefs are not evidence. They are assertions or assumptions and you need to provide evidence to support your assertion.
- I am not going to dismiss your evidence as 'not being real'. I am going to dismiss your 'evidence' if it is an assertion instead of evidence.
- You are trying to dodge your burden of proof by creating your own evidence system. That is not going to work.
- So, what is this great evidence you have FOR the existence of your god?

Freddy Davis

@Absque Religione

Mistake 1: Atheism is the affirmative belief that God does not exist. You have expressed the negative aspect of your belief, but there is a positive one, as well, that you seem to want to ignore. This has actually been dealt with extensively with others on this string. Perhaps you should read before you make false comments like that.

Mistake 2: There are, indeed, non-theistic forms of Atheism. However, this video was specifically about naturalistic Atheism. Perhaps you need to rewatch.

Mistake 3: Evidence is not dependent on a person's worldview, but their interpretation of the evidence absolutely is - along with the logic they use to interpret the evidence. Based on that fact, nothing you have said has any validity at all.

It seems to me that you have absolutely no understanding of worldview concepts. Perhaps you should go to school on that before you dig yourself a deeper hole.

[Note: At this point, Absque Religione chose not to continue the conversation.]

Ex-Born Again

What makes you think that Atheism is a religion?

Freddy Davis

It is based on faith presuppositions. There is no empirical evidence in existence to demonstrate that it is true.

Ex-Born Again

@Freddy Davis - Can you explain what you mean by "faith presuppositions" with an example or two?

Freddy Davis

@Ex-Born Again - A presupposition is an assumption that people make which is the basis of some conclusion. When it comes to worldview matters (matters of faith) every person (without exception) begins with a set of assumptions (presuppositions) about how reality is structured that cannot be empirically proven - and must, therefore, be believed by faith. Examples: Naturalists begin with the assumption that the natural universe is all that exists. Theists begin with the assumption that God exists. Pantheists begin with the assumption that ultimate reality is composed of an immaterial, impersonal transcendent reality of some sort.

Animists begin with the assumption that there is a spirit world and a material world that interact with each other in a symbiotic relationship. This does not mean there is no evidence, it is just that there is no empirical evidence (which is a serious problem for Naturalists since they believe that the natural universe operating by natural laws is all that exists, and that ultimately everything must be explainable by empirical means).

Since each of these sets of presuppositions exclude all of the others, it is impossible for more than one of them to reflect the actual structure of reality. The quest is, then, to find the truth about reality. I believe it is found in a personal relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ. God is an objectively real person who can be known, and He has revealed Himself to mankind - both in a general way, and an individual way.

Ex-Born Again

@Freddy Davis - One final thing: What are the presuppositions that are made by atheists?

Freddy Davis

@Ex-Born Again - Atheists are Naturalists (at least the variety we are dealing with here).

Ex-Born Again

@Freddy Davis - I asked those questions to make sure that I am not straw-manning you.

Anyway here is my response:

Although Atheism is related to naturalism, they are not synonyms of one another. Naturalism is the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted.

Atheism does not do that. In simple words, it asks the question: Is there any evidence for what you present? Unlike naturalism, Atheism does not discount, and is not biased against, a non-natural entity. However, you have to back up your claims with evidence.

In fact, the whole world actually runs on atheistic principles. Imagine that a person is lying dead on the road with a knife sticking out of his head. Do you say, "God stuck him down with a knife". Or would you look for more mundane explanations? Occam's Razor dictates that we should always rule out natural explanations, before seeking supernatural explanations.

As an atheist, I am fine with spiritual stuff like ghosts and gods. However, they cannot be accepted without evidence.

So, let me repeat the question which I asked previously: What are the faith-presuppositions made by atheists? This time, please don't confuse naturalism with atheism.

Freddy Davis

@Ex-Born Again - Actually, it is you who are confusing the definitions. I never equated them in the first place. Naturalism is a worldview. Atheism is a belief system that is an expression of Naturalism in that it is built upon the essential beliefs of a naturalistic worldview. That is the relationship between the two. Atheism is a positive assertion that God does not exist. And in spite of what you have said about it not being biased against a non-natural entity, the evidence you require from people who propose a different belief is naturalistic evidence. There are other kinds of evidence that you will not accept because it does not correspond to the beliefs of Naturalism.

I am curious, though, since you specifically mentioned ghosts and gods, what evidence would satisfy you that they were real?

Ex-Born Again

@Freddy Davis

YOU: "Actually, it is you who are confusing the definitions. I never equated them in the first place."

Me: Here is your previous comment: "Atheists are Naturalists (at least the variety we are dealing with here)."

YOU: "Atheism is a belief system that is an expression of Naturalism in that it is built upon the essential beliefs of a naturalistic worldview. That is the relationship between the two. Atheism is a positive assertion that God does not exist."

ME: No atheism is not a positive assertion that God does not exist. That is something that Christians often allege, which most atheists don't really make. While there are some exceptions, most atheists have a simple stance that says: To believe in something you need evidence.

I have clearly showed you how atheism and naturalism are different, however, you are just muddying the waters here.

YOU: "And in spite of what you have said about it not being biased against a non-natural entity, the evidence you require from people who propose a different belief is naturalistic evidence. There are other kinds of evidence that you will not accept because it does not correspond to the beliefs of Naturalism."

ME: Your only other evidence is this: The Bible tells me so.

YOU: I am curious, though, since you specifically mentioned ghosts and gods, what evidence would satisfy you that they were real?

ME: Here are some of the evidence that will satisfy me:

Any evidence that God meddles with the present universe.

Here is things that DO NOT count:

"it is written in this book"

"it is in my mind"

"it happened in some distant past and cannot be re-analysed objectively now"

"we don't know, therefore God"

"mere coincidences"

Freddy Davis

@Ex-Born Again - Atheists are Naturalists, but Atheism is not Naturalism. You don't seem to understand the distinction. Naturalism is the belief that the Natural Universe is all that exists. There are numerous belief systems that emerge from this worldview foundation - Atheism being one of them. Naturalism is atheistic (by definition), so all of the belief systems that are expressions of it are also atheistic. The fact that a person doesn't choose to make that particular distinction when discussing their religious beliefs does not eliminate the fact that it exists. Most people's worldview beliefs actually exist at an unconscious level - they simply assume them to be true without ever even exploring other possibilities. Your response seems to indicate that is the case for you and many of your Atheist friends.

You say that you need evidence to believe in something, but your response indicates you don't really grasp the implications of that statement. You see, it is not merely evidence that you require, but a particular kind of evidence (as vividly expressed in the list of evidentiary facts that you are not willing to consider). So, what I am assuming from your statement and from your list (I am having to assume because you only specified evidence in a generic sense and not any kind of specific type) is that you will only consider empirical evidence - that which can be verified by scientific inquiry.

So, answer these four questions for me and back up your answer with only empirical evidence - that which has been verified by scientific inquiry.

1. What is the origin of the matter and energy that makes up the natural universe?
2. What is the origin of life?

3. How did the variety of life forms that exist on earth come into existence?
4. What is the origin of consciousness?

I believe that what you will find is that you believe things that do not fit your definition of valid evidence based on your own requirements. You must believe your own answers by faith in your naturalistic presuppositions. Or, you can prove me wrong by answering the 4 questions based on your requirements. I eagerly await your reply.

[Note: At this point, Ex-Born Again chose not to continue the conversation.]

I have found that most Atheists who engage this kind conversation drop out of the conversation when they come to a place where they realize that their reasoning does not hold up. They require that I, as a Christian, prove God exists using beliefs that are not a part of my Christian belief system. On the other hand, when challenged to justify their beliefs using their own requirements, they are unable to do so. The reason for this is that, even though they think their beliefs are based on science, in actual fact they are based on faith and they don't even realize it. When this is demonstrated to them, they simply don't know how to handle it.

The truth is, every belief in existence is based on faith. That doesn't mean that there is no evidence to support it, it is just that the evidence is not based on empiricism. And that is where Naturalists end up with problems – they are not able to empirically explain their own belief foundation using their own naturalistic requirements.

While it is unlikely that a conversation like this will actually lead a person to receive Christ, it can be an important means of "tilling the ground." Not every conversation directly leads to bearing fruit for the gospel. However, by preparing the soil, it is possible that someone else they meet in the future may plant seeds that produce gospel fruit.

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