Atheism and Belief Systems Interview Analysis

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Interview with a Non-Believing Friend

There are many religious schools of thought that are prevalent today; however, with the advent of science and a vast bank of ideas and theories available, people are more prone to explore and question the purpose of their existence as well as that of a higher power. As a result, many people have emerged as being non-believers. An interview was conducted with a non-believing friend to explore the perspectives of an atheist. This paper presents the interview responses, followed by a personal perspective and analysis of the interview from a biblical and philosophical viewpoint.

What do you think the reality is made up of?

Reality is a mirror of your inner thoughts. Whatever you think is manifested in the world around you. The more you think of a lack of something in your life, for example, money – and you put it on a higher pedestal, thinking of it as something unattainable, the more struggle you will face in achieving it. Whereas, when you redirect your thoughts towards a positive mindset, you will see it manifested in reality. The thoughts our conscious mind feeds to the subconscious are materialized as reality.

Do you think God exists? Why or Why not?

I do believe that there is a higher power, but not in the way it is presented to us through different religions. In every religion, you would see an emotional attachment to the idea of God. I have seen believers either presenting God as someone you should fear or as the kindest one in existence. However, I believe that whoever the higher power is, that being is neutral and is accessible to anyone regardless of their belief. I think that God is the purest reflection of every creature on earth. He does not need organized religions to appease Him. The idea of different faiths is made up by humans, not by God. I do not share the view that non-believers are condemned for life, as many religious people like to reiterate. I have come across many non-believers who are better human beings than the ones who claim to be religious. I think that the true essence of someone's character is not in their belief but in their dealings with others.

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Where do you look for evidence about what is true?

I do not particularly look for evidence; however, when something troubles me, I usually take time to think about it and analyze the cause. I try to find answers within me by introspection. For the greater truths, such as how the world came into existence, the religions put forth the concept of Adam and Eve, whereas the scientific reasoning is presented through the Big Bang theory and evolution. I believe that we can understand the abstract ideas purported by religions through the application of science. Therefore, in this case, maybe the first-ever conscious and fully evolved humans on earth were Adam and Eve; however, they didn't just come into existence; there was a cause behind it, and that cause can be attributed to the Big Bang and evolution. The idealist presentation of religions simply doesn't make any sense.

What makes a good person?

A good person is someone fully aware of their inner truths. They are particularly aware of their flaws and strive each day for betterment. People who pretend to be self-righteous are often hypocrites. Goodness is not defined by religious rituals, and superiority does not come with faith. A good person is one who does not judge others for what they are, especially when such judgments lead to religion-based hate crimes. Accepting others for what they are and owning a heart that is free of hate for others is what makes one a good person.

Who is an example of a good person, and why?

For me, an example of a good person would be my father. The reason for this is the kind of brought-up he has given me and for the role model he has been. I have always seen my father, to be honest, but never hurtful. He has never passed judgment on others, even if it conflicted with his views. From him, I have learned truthfulness and dignity, and, most importantly, he has always taught me never to offend another living being, human or animal. From him, I have learned kindness in its truest form.

Analysis of the Interview

What do you think of the answers they gave to you?

While I strongly believe that everyone has a right to their faith, there are some views from the above-mentioned interview that I disagree with. Like my friend, I also acknowledge the power of an optimistic mindset; however, I believe that the true source of all meaning is connected to the concept of God. The world we live in, as well as all life forms, are creations of God. I also believe in His Sovereignty and that the true meaning of life is to accept, without question, the ordinance of God. While I do believe God to be the Kindest, I also think that our digressions might evoke punishment.

Despite my belief system, I agree that one must never be judgmental of the choices other people make – it is our experiences that shape our opinions. Therefore, the interviewee spoke from her perspective.

How would you answer the questions from a biblical perspective?

The biblical viewpoint highlights the mortal nature of this world and all that exists within it. The reality of this world and the Sovereignty of God can be understood by Colossian 2:17 verse: “Things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ”. Similarly, Jeremiah 10:10 quotes, “But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth, quakes. And the nations cannot endure His indignation.” The Bible exalts God as the Greatest of all and sheds light on His Wrath which us mere humans cannot endure. Everything in this world and beyond belongs to Him alone (Bible English New International Version, 2013).

The Bible teaches humans to submit to the will of God, which, according to Romans 12:2, is “his good, pleasing and perfect will”. Genesis 15:6 regards Abraham as righteous because of his faith in God. Therefore, the foremost requirement to be considered a good person is to believe in the Lord. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, the Bible regards a person who encourages his brothers and sisters towards faith as good; this means that spreading God’s religion is an important part of one’s belief. Isaiah 1:17 further builds on the traits of a good human and states, “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” while Philippians 2:3-4 quotes, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourself, not looking to your interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Bible English New International Version, 2013). The message of the Bible clearly defines a good person as someone who lives their life in humility and not in pride of their faith. Most of the deeds mentioned above pertain to helping others: the oppressed, the fatherless, the widow – hence, goodness does not come solely from ritual; it comes from being humane and selfless.

How would you classify their answers from what you have learned in philosophy?

The responses to the above-mentioned interview can be attributed to objectivism, humanism, and existentialism. Objectivists seek truth to describe various phenomena, and this is based on adhering to truth-conducive methods by analyzing the available information to avoid prejudicial thinking (Katz, 1997). The interview response about the creation of the world shows the interviewee’s inner debate, taking into consideration both notions and constructing her own opinion. As humanism deals largely with ethics, the interviewee’s reasoning about values and faith in humanity also reflects the same. The ideas of humanism, i.e., doing good and leading a good life, are echoed in the interviewee’s response (Norman, 2004). With a focus on one’s existence, existentialism promotes the freedom of humans to give meaning to their lives and to find the purpose of existence (Flynn, 2006). Taking an

individualistic approach to finding meaning rather than as a part of a religious group, the interviewee highlights the importance of freedom, especially with the idea of being non-judgmental.

What was it like to have this conversation with a friend regarding questions that matter?

Listening to certain views that are quite different from mine was somewhat difficult. I felt an urge to share my viewpoint and correct the interviewee in her conceptual understanding; however, I respect her opinions and her freedom to practice what she believes to be true.

Conclusively, I think that in matters of belief, each person should be allowed to practice as they please – for the power of judgment resides with God alone.

References

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