

This is a sketch. I may take the time in the future to improve it, but the rough outlines should be clear enough.

In my view, Socialism and Atheism are related phenomena. Culturally, what seems to happen is that atheism is deduced from the premise of Materialism, and Socialism from both. Since most qualitative social differences have been historically encoded in religious notions, their retention is problematic for those who view matter—which is everywhere equal in its quality, and differs merely in its current form—as the primary reality. The logical deduction made is that difference is the primary crime, and that egalitarianism is therefore the primary virtue.

This egalitarianism is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative in that no one group of people can be seen as superior to another. Men are not superior to women; nor are women superior to men. No culture is better than another, and no set of moral claims—outside that of egalitarianism—is or can be universally valid, and Socialism—the political expression of Materialism—the logical conclusion from the “observation” of the equality of all matter, and thus all possible human realities. The end goal is that all people are equal in social standing, exactly. Not only are kings deposed, but the morally and intellectually mediocre—by previous standards—are elevated.

Quantitatively, in that the material circumstances of all is supposed to be EXACTLY equal. This is the obvious, outer rhetorical face of Socialism, but in my view this aspect is of less importance than the notion of cultural redundancy, which is the idea, expressed through moral relativism, that all cultures are wrong. Those which are relatively less powerful or prosperous will be temporarily favored, but that support is contextual and not principled.

In my view, all this flows naturally from the premise of Materialism. Logically, then, the question of the nature of reality is the first question to be evaluated in evaluating Atheism as a doctrine.

Prior to addressing this, though, I would like to make a few points, and address some of the more common and more silly arguments against the consideration of religious truth claims. The most important is the notion of severability. What this means is that doctrines and cultural systems are not either true or not true. They can be contingently true, partially true, or occasionally true.

Consider remedies for, say, asthma. Let me postulate that the remedies in, say, the Incan Empire, the Chinese Empire, and Scandinavia differed. Different methods were used for different reasons. Perhaps in one case a plant was administered in which it was believed the “Spirit of Wind” inhered. Perhaps in another case a shaman went into trance, and intervened in the world of the ancestors on behalf of the patient. Perhaps in another case it was believed that it was a short term malady that would pass with the season. In all cases, clinically, relief was obtained.

It is an empirical fact beyond any possibility of question that the belief in the efficacy of a cure can in fact facilitate healing. This is the placebo effect. All drug clinical trials have three groups, at least: those taking the drug being tested, those taking a placebo, and those taking nothing, and who know that they are taking nothing. In almost all cases, those taking the placebo heal faster than those who take nothing, but not as fast as those taking drugs which are determined through the trials to be clinically efficacious.

Let us posit that the plant taken by, say, the Incans, was found to possess some clinically significant chemical compound whose pharmacological significance can be assessed using modern methods. Does this mean that cures obtained in the other two cases—which we might consider placebo effects—did not happen? Of course not. What in fact happened is that the mind interacted with the body in a way which was beneficial. Quite obviously, beliefs happen in the mind, and if healing happens where they are present, and not where they are not, then it is the deciding variable, since it is the only variable.

What diseases does religion heal? First off, it can be a facilitating agent in the placebo effect. Whether or not prayer is ever found to be intrinsically beneficial, it can clearly be of benefit for those who believe it will be.

More importantly, though, it acts to provide people with a sense of personal and shared meaning, relief from the anxiety of interacting with a universe with no discernable order, a means of determining political order outside that obtained through raw aggression, and a means of contextualizing economic activity.

In my own terms, it provides a meaning system, a truth system, a political system, and an economic system. All of these things happen whether or not ANY of the beliefs are valid.

We often see the claim that religion is a source of violence. Yet, it is difficult to see why violence, itself, would be objectionable to those whose model of life is predicated on the notion that all progress happens through competitions for survival. Violence got us here, on their account.

All Hitler did was take the conclusions of German evolutionary biologists—that races existed on a hierarchy of quality, with Aryans at the top—and determine that the fittest had both the right and the duty to strengthen humanity by doing away with the inferior. What he did in five years was what it had taken millions of years of ordinary evolution to accomplish. He saw it as an accomplishment. It was a perfectly rational position, given his presuppositions.

To be clear, I don't share his premises, and view both the Nazis and Communists in the same light: they were evil human beings, as are their modern exponents. This is a word I will return to.

It is equally hard to grasp why enthusiasts of evolutionary biology would not recognize that if religion is ubiquitous in human culture, that it plainly has survival value. It was plainly beneficial to many people, for long stretches of history, right through the modern period. Religion was a universal even 300 years ago, and we obviously have not had time to evolve further since then.

What purpose does it serve? It would seem to me it binds people together in communities, that win thereby greater resistance to the vagaries of nature and other tribes. They are more likely to replicate their DNA.

And to the point, the fundamental herd instinct religion expresses is NECESSARILY also present in atheists. It is every bit as hard-wired as aggression, altruism, and the urge to procreate; this, according to their own account. Logically, then, one would look for the same behavior, just with different beliefs, as one would expect in those with religious commitments. In my view, the

doctrine of atheism is their faith, which is a de facto religion in the cultural sense of the word, in that to be a member, one must affirm a core belief in the nature of reality, one which is unverifiable; or, at least in their case, one which they have taken few pains to attempt to validate.

I should distinguish as well at this point between Atheism and Agnosticism. The first connotes a firm conviction that there is no God. In general, no effort is made to convey what specifically is being rejected, other than the entirety of human religions. One will see the argument made from time to time that it is the adherents of religions that believe something, whereas the atheists merely DON'T believe. Yet, a whole set of beliefs is connoted.

In general, religions provide answers to two fundamental concerns: what happens when we die; and does the universe have a latent order. With regard to the first, the Vikings believed in Valhalla. Christians believe in heaven and hell. Buddhists and Hindus believe we live many lives.

With regard to the second, the Vikings believed that every day a hungry wolf tried to chase down the sun, and that an end of time would come, Ragnarok, when Odin and his chosen warriors would fight the Giants, as the world ended in fire and ice. Christians believe there will be a Last Judgement. Buddhists and Hindus believe that we evolve spiritually over countless lifetimes.

Atheists believe that consciousness and the brain are one and the same, and that when the neural activity of the brain ceases, so too does consciousness. They further believe that whatever meaning the universe may have, whatever order, is strictly that of physical laws, whose appreciation seems to provide for many an aesthetic sentiment not entirely dissimilar to that of religion. Some atheists, of course, simply collapse into nihilism, since in the vast expanses of the universe, mankind means nothing.

Since we are matter, it becomes quite challenging to define us, in principle, as superior to animals, or even the Earth itself. In the end, we are all the same thing. Dust from dust; dust to dust.

These are metaphysical understandings. To stipulate them as given is to make an empirical claim. It is to claim that no contrary evidence exists, and this is simply not the case. Since their claims are in fact counter-factual—according to most modern scientific narratives—their faith must be seen as precisely that.

Agnostic simply means “don’t know”. This is a position in which no claims and no firm decisions are made. It is the position of being open to convincing, in whatever direction the evidence leads.

Given all this, let me return now to the idea of Materialism. Put bluntly, it is virtually indefensible. We have two proven, tested understandings of the nature of reality: Einstein’s General Relativity, and Quantum Physics. What many don’t grasp about General Relativity is that it is a materialistic doctrine, in which fields are the primary reality, and matter and energy simply interchangeable within that context. Many of you have no doubt heard of Einstein’s lifelong quest for a Unified Field Theory. What he wanted was a means of reconciling his system—which worked exceedingly well for gravity fields—and the very small domains of the quantum physicists.

Yet, quantum physics poses a number of challenges to Relativity, with the most serious being Non-Locality.

Proven both empirically and mathematically, non-locality is the term used to describe the ability of quantum particles to “communicate” with one another at speeds much faster than the speed of light, and amounting—in theory, as we can’t test this—to the capacity to interact at infinite speed. Information can literally cross the universe in a nanosecond.

Put simply, non-locality and General Relativity are incompatible. They cannot both be true. Einstein himself said so, in so many words. Yet non-locality is a reality. Given this, Einstein must have been wrong. Very, very few physicists want to admit this. Given this, of the two truth narratives to which we have access, quantum physics is clearly the only one which is not contradicted by evidence.

And what does quantum physics say about the nature of reality? Several important things. First, that we swim in a sea of nearly infinite energy. As Richard Feynman put it, there is enough latent energy in one square meter of “empty” space to boil every ocean on earth. All physicists know about this, but practically most of them ignore it, not wanting to delve into the implications of what is an eminently practical theory.

It is a common misconception that Einstein did away with the “ether” theories of the universe, which in effect said there was this stuff in space against which we moved. In reality, all light is both a wave and a particle, and when in its wave aspect, it has to be a wave in SOMETHING. For quantum physicists, this would be what they call the Zero Point Field, or sometimes Quantum Vacuum.

The second important aspect of the theory is that the observable world in which all events exist within a cause and effect relationship is preceded by another world within which events are NOT dictated by causality, but rather by probability. What is latent only becomes “real” when measured or observed. From this, most theorists (this is not universal) infer that “reality”, per se, does not exist separately from the process of interaction with consciousness. The “world” is not hard; we create it in the act of observing it. This idea has important ramifications.

First, if the matter of which we are supposedly composed exists only because our consciousness is observing it, then there is no need to suppose that the brain—which is a material artifact—is necessarily synonymous with consciousness, per se. Several of the principle quantum pioneers saw in their work a means of explaining how the survival of death might be possible.

Second, when you combine non-locality, the Zero point Field, and consciousness, it becomes possible to see how “psychic” phenomenon might be possible. For example, it might be possible to “see” things at a distance. It might be possible to communicate thoughts directly. Prayer might work.

Thus, the dominant, non-falsified world view of quantum physics shows how certain aspects of religious belief might in fact have some basis in reality. They might work. One can say that while all religions may be in part wrong, they can all also be in part right. One does not have to say that

either one is true, or all are false. One can find value in beliefs in Odin, Jesus, Krishna, and—to the extent that it results in positive beliefs about the value of things like prayer and the survival of death—even the infamous Flying Spaghetti Monster, which atheists so often like to use—with seemingly sadistic glee—to mock their opponents.

And to make a long story short, empirical data has arisen in the modern world supporting the existence of Remote Viewing (the ability to see things that actually exist in one's mind), telepathy, precognition, and yes the survival of death.

I am not going to evaluate all that evidence here. In my experience, members of the atheist tribe do not understand that skepticism is equidistance from both belief and doubt; and people who are willing to consider that the universe might be more interesting than they suppose don't need much convincing to do more digging.

One good book to read is Dean Radin's "The Conscious Universe", which reviews what was the best evidence for psi ten years ago (it has improved since then; he wrote another book, but I have not read it).

With respect to the survival of death, Victor Zammit has provided a good launching point for research in his book and website, at www.victorzammit.com. I've seen him insulted many times, and the intellectual capacity of people who follow him impugned. This I've seen many times. What I have never seen, on the part of a skeptic, is an actual effort to evaluate the evidence he provides, most of which arises from other sources which are quite copious.

I will submit two items, of interest to me personally. First is the [case of a woman](#) who recorded memories when she was clinically brain dead. It is a Near Death Experience for which no credible alternative explanations exist. Her brain was not starved of oxygen: it was flatlining, for an hour, since they sucked all the blood out. (I will add, parenthetically, that if the explanation of NDE's was biological, then we would expect them to be routine, just as being light-headed is an effect of holding your breath; this isn't the case, and in a few cases very detailed information is obtained for which no material source was available).

Second, a materialization medium is out there, David Thompson, who by hundreds of accounts can literally materialize dead people. If he is a fraud, he is one who has quite clearly never been tested by a skeptic. One would think a serious scientist would want to have a look at that.

Net: no one religion needs to be fully true, for all religions to be closer to the truth of our universe than materialistic accounts. Atheism has negative consequences for a great many of its adherents, and plainly is not able to dispense with the evolutionary disposition we all have to "religicize". It is not consistent with the best explanations we have about how things work, and unable to incorporate within its narrative many phenomena that have been measured empirically.

Finally, religion, at least in America, is associated with a host of desirable results, including [decreases in rates of depression, criminality, divorce, and educational underachievement](#).

Atheism is not scientific. It is not associated with positive social outcomes.

I conclude, therefore, that it is fundamentally irrational. I could go on, but need to move on to other projects.

If you feel the need to give me feedback, you can reach me at bearachtraining@yahoo.com I answer all sincerely intended emails. I'm not bothered by insults, but am bothered by pretentious ignorance, which is found quite abundantly with respect to this topic.