

A rational case for God's existence - HANDOUT

(Limmud: Daniel Anderson – 28th December 2021/24th Tevet 5781)

Morality without God

1. Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear ... There are no gods, no purposes, no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I am going to be dead. That's the end for me. There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning to life, and no free will for humans, either. **Dr William B. Provine, 'Origins Research' 16(1) (1994)**
2. *"If a person doesn't think there is a God to be accountable to, then what's the point of trying to modify your behaviour to keep it within acceptable ranges? That's how I thought anyway. I always believed the theory of evolution as truth, that we all just came from the slime. When we, when we died, you know, that was it, there is nothing..."*
**Jeffrey Dahmer (serial killer and sex offender),
Interview with Stone Phillips, Dateline NBC (29th November 1994)**
3. Either half my colleagues are enormously stupid, or else the science of Darwinism is fully compatible with conventional religious beliefs – and equally compatible with atheism.
**Stephen Jay Gould, 'Impeaching a Self-Appointed Judge,'
Scientific American, 1992**
4. Evolution, which proceeds on a path of ascendancy, provides an optimistic foundation for the world. How is it possible to despair at a time when we see that everything evolves and ascends?
Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), Orot Hakodesh II: 537
5. The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day, from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. **Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (1946)**
6. If it is up to man, to everyone individually to choose, who is to decide on right or wrong? Every choice of each person is as valid as that of any other. There are then no objective standards by which to choose and to decide. While the practice of human kindness toward all may be meaningful for one person, genocide may be equally meaningful for another.
Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, Crisis and Faith (1975)
7. The problem with theism is of course the shaky grounds for believing in God. But the problem with morality, I now maintain, is that it is in even worse shape than religion in this regard; for if there were a God, His issuing commands would make some kind of sense. But if there is no God, as of course atheists assert, then what sense could be made of there being commands of this sort? In sum, while theists take the obvious existence of moral commands to be a kind of proof of the existence of a Commander, i.e., God, I now take the non-existence of a Commander as a kind of proof that there are no Commands, i.e., morality. **Joel Marks, 'An Amoral Manifesto', Philosophy Now, Issue 80 (2010)**

A rational case for God's existence - HANDOUT

(Limmud: Daniel Anderson – 28th December 2021/24th Tevet 5781)

8. In so far as the word “knowledge” has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.

**Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power',
Section 481 (1883-88), translated by Walter Kaufmann**

9. *“Most of you here know what it means when 100 corpses lie next to each other, when there are 500 or when there are 1,000. To have endured this and at the same time to have remained a decent person - with exceptions due to human weaknesses - has made us tough and is a glorious chapter that has not and will not be spoken of.”*

Heinrich Himmler, SS Meeting, Posen, 4th October 1943

10. [The argument that a foetus is not alive] is a resort to a convenient fiction that turns an evidently living being into one that legally is not alive. Instead of accepting such fictions, we should recognise that the fact that a being is human, and alive, does not in itself tell us whether it is wrong to take that being's life.

**Peter Singer, 'Rethinking Life and Death Rethinking Life and Death:
The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics' (1994)**

11. Now it must be admitted that these arguments apply to the new-born baby as much as to the foetus. A week-old baby is not a rational and self-conscious being, and there are many non-human animals whose rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel pain (sentience), and so on, exceeds that of a human baby a week, a month, or even a year old. If the foetus does not have the same claim to life as a person, it appears that the *new-born baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee is to the non-human animal.*

Peter Singer, 'Practical Ethics', p.169 (1981)

12. If we can put aside these emotionally moving, but strictly irrelevant aspects of the killing of a baby, we can see that the grounds for not killing persons do not apply to new-born infants. The indirect, classical utilitarian reason does not apply, because no one capable of understanding what is happening when a new-born baby is killed could feel threatened by a policy that gave less protection to the new-born than to adults. In this respect, [Jeremy] Bentham was right to describe infanticide as 'of a nature not to give the slightest in quietude to the most timid imagination'. Once we are old enough to comprehend the policy, we are too old to be threatened by it.

Peter Singer, 'Practical Ethics', p.152 (1981)

13. There must be a law that no imperfect or maimed child shall be brought up. And to avoid an excess in population, some children must be exposed. For a limit must be fixed to the population of the state.

Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), 'Politics VII', 16

14. Children also, if weak and deformed, we drown, not through anger, but through the wisdom of preferring the sound to the useless.

Seneca (c.1 BC-65 AD) 'Concerning Anger', I.XV

A rational case for God's existence - HANDOUT

(Limmud: Daniel Anderson – 28th December 2021/24th Tevet 5781)

15. Sex with animals is still definitely taboo... but sex with animals does not always involve cruelty. Who has not been at a social occasion disrupted by the household dog gripping the legs of a visitor and vigorously rubbing its penis against them? The host usually discourages such activities, but in private not everyone objects to being used by her or his dog in this way, and occasionally mutually satisfying activities may develop... we are animals, indeed more specifically, we are great apes. This does not make sex across the species barrier normal, or natural, whatever those much-misused words may mean, but it does imply that it ceases to be an offence to our status and dignity as human beings...

Peter Singer, 'Heavy Petting', Nerve (2001)

16. *"Peter, I think you must be one of the most moral people in the world. You certainly have one of the most logically thought-out ethical positions in the world."*

Richard Dawkins in conversation with Peter Singer, 'The Genius of Darwin' DVD (2008)

17. Priestly abuse of children is nowadays taken to mean sexual abuse, and I feel obliged at the outset, to get the whole matter of sexual abuse into proportion and out of the way. Others have noted that we live in a time of hysteria about paedophilia, a mob psychology that calls to mind the Salem witch-hunts of 1692. In July 2002 the News of the World...organized a 'name and shame' campaign...In fairness...at the time of its campaign's passions had been aroused by the truly horrifying murder, sexually motivated, of an eight-year-old kidnapped in Sussex. Nevertheless, it is clearly unjust to visit upon all paedophiles a vengeance appropriate to the tiny minority who are also murderers...Once, in the question time after a lecture in Dublin, I was asked what I thought about the widely publicized cases of sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Ireland. I replied that, horrible as sexual abuse no doubt was, the damage was arguably less than the long-term psychological damage inflicted by bringing the child up Catholic in the first place.

Richard Dawkins, 'The God Delusion', p.354-356 (2006)

18. The positive nature of some child-adult sexual relationships is not confined to non-Western cultures. Several of my friends – gay and straight, male and female – had sex with adults from the ages of nine to 13. None feel they were abused. All say it was their conscious choice and gave them great joy. While it may be impossible to condone paedophilia, it is time society acknowledged the truth that not all sex involving children is unwanted, abusive, and harmful.

Peter Tatchell, Letter to 'The Guardian' (26th June 1997)

19. My Guardian letter cited examples of youths in Papuan tribes and some of my friends who, when they were under 16, had sex with adults (18+), but who do not feel they were harmed. As an example, the film-maker Derek Jarman told me that he had sex with an adult, at his initiative, from the age of nine. He said he did not feel abused or damaged by the experience. If that is his view, who are you or I to dispute and reject it? I was not endorsing his viewpoint or that of others who did likewise.

Peter Tatchell's response, 'Under-age sex: Statement of clarification'

A rational case for God's existence - HANDOUT

(Limmud: Daniel Anderson – 28th December 2021/24th Tevet 5781)

The problem of evil

20. Theologians worry away at the “problem of evil” and a related “problem of suffering”.

On the day I originally wrote this paragraph, the British newspapers all carried a terrible story about a bus full of children from a Roman Catholic school that crashed for no obvious reason, with wholesale loss of life. Not for the first time, clerics were in paroxysms over the theological question that a writer on a London newspaper (The Sunday Telegraph) framed this way: *“How can you believe in a loving, all-powerful God who allows such a tragedy?”* The article went on to quote one priest’s reply: *“The simple answer is that we do not know why there should be a God who lets these awful things happen. But the horror of the crash, to a Christian, confirms the fact that we live in a world of real values: positive and negative. If the universe was just electrons, there would be no problem of evil or suffering.”*

On the contrary, if the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies like the crashing of this bus are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.

Richard Dawkins, 'River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life' (1995)

21. Yes, we are barbarians. It is an honourable title to us...I am embarking on a struggle to the death with the Jews for the hearts and minds of men. The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind - circumcision for the body, and conscience for the soul. They are Jewish inventions... I am freeing humanity from the shackles of the soul, from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and ethics...

Adolf Hitler, 'Mein Kampf' (My Struggle), 1925/26

22. There is probably No God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.

British Humanist Association 2009 bus campaign slogan

23. *“The reality is it could have been any child leaving the town hall as there are so many who visit there.”*

Kate Hollis, quoted in The Telegraph, 14 May 2012

24. *“What is the meaning of it?”* said Holmes solemnly as he laid down the paper. *“What is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.”*

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box' (1892)