

BELIEF, FAITH AND REASON FOR THE HUMANIST

What is truth?

Truth is what is real. Truth is truth whether it is believed or accepted or not. Contradiction is impossibility. It is the enemy of truth.

What is religion?

Religion means a system of belief that obligates its members to obey a supernatural authority in worship and in how they live and gives them a list of beliefs they must accept. Religion comes from a word meaning to bind.

What does it mean to be reasonable or rational?

To avoid contradictions, or to avoid opinions and beliefs that are not based on an open-minded assessment of the evidence. Avoid far-fetched thinking or unfair thinking such as rationalisations.

What is a rationalisation?

Here is an example. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri allegedly because God gave him the magic power to. The translation was a fraud. Instead of admitting this, the Mormons say that Joseph mistook divine revelations of the words of the book as a translation. The only way to avoid rationalisation is to take the simplest explanation. Religion is based on rationalisation.

What does judging mean?

Judging is forming an opinion or belief about something or someone in a critical way or a good way. Those who say they do neither are in fact judging that they cannot form a good or bad belief or opinion. Thus if a person is good they will not judge them as good. That is not fair to the person. Judging then is unavoidable.

What are those who tell you not to judge trying to get you to do?

Sometimes they don't want people criticised because the criticism may be unfair but mostly they are trying to bully you for having principles and recognising right and distinguishing it from wrong. They do not respect you and want you to do violence to yourself and deviate from human nature which makes us judge.

If you tell someone they did wrong and they tell you not to judge what does that say to you?

If they were able to defend themselves and were content in what they did they would not mind being judged. They don't want to be seen for what they really are. They want to bully you into failing to see your right to decide things for yourself about them.

Is it true that we must judge nobody?

Judging is natural for us. We cannot avoid it.

Do those who say they judge nobody judge those who judge?

Yes. They are hypocrites who really repudiate all standards.

What do we need to do?

Judge them fairly and always look at yourself first. If you were as bad as them in that past that does not count. That is all over now. If you are as bad as them now - that's different. Fix yourself first.

What does the thought that we are all sinners imply?

That we judge one another as sinners in a general way. If judging is so bad, then it's not as bad to say somebody did a bad thing and is bad insofar as they did it as it is to see them as a sinner for that implies they are generally sinful all their life.

What reason are we given for not judging others?

That we are not perfect ourselves and that we cannot fully know another's circumstances. For example, maybe they rob others for they need cash for life-saving medicines for their children and have no way of getting money but robbery.

What is wrong with the first reason?

It will not stop us judging. Being bad yourself doesn't mean you can't judge others and judge them correctly.

What is wrong with the second reason?

It implies that you would judge if you had the facts and it's not judging that is the problem but the inability to be sure one

Judges right.

What matters most - telling others the truth or being kind?

Telling the truth. People need to learn to deal with the truth. They do not need us treating them like children. If they want to behave that way, it is up to them to correct themselves.

Is it reasonable to believe a claim just because it cannot be refuted?

Irrefutability is not a virtue or an argument in favour of a doctrine or claim. It is a vice. The more serious the claim the more serious the vice. For example, those Christians who claim that belief in God is reasonable because they incorrectly surmise that it is irrefutable are making a very serious claim and are a good example of this vice.

Should I think for myself?

Nobody should tell me what to think or do – that would be against the fundamental fact that I must love and worship myself and never put anybody else over myself. I think about what the systems that be say, for myself, and decide if it is right because if I don't think for myself, I don't have confidence in myself and that is wrong.

What does it say about me if I follow a religion like a sheep and let the leaders think for me and imagine they have guidance from God?

I am a bigot inside because I am indicating others should do the same as me and demean themselves for religion.

Do Humanists follow reason more than feelings?

Yes. Religious people usually mistake feeling that something is true for believing that it is true. They engage in emotional reasoning - which is only a simulation of reasoning and its not reasoning at all. Humanists should follow their feelings but only after reasoning carefully first. Religion talks about faith informed by reason. We talk about feelings informed by reason. We do not want a dry and cold philosophy. And indeed we shouldn't.

Is it correct to argue that the stranger an idea is, then the more exceptional evidence is the evidence you need for it?

Yes - miracle claims cannot be rationally believed unless you see the miracles yourself. One's opinions, beliefs and convictions should be proportional to the amount of evidence one has and needs for them.

Can you give an example of how this works?

If I say that I can jump twenty feet into the air with no props then I shouldn't make this claim to anybody unless I can show them. Similarly, if Jesus claimed he did the more amazing thing of rising from the dead he should appear to us all and perhaps let the best scientists and investigators check him out.

Are you saying that nobody ought to believe in a miracle unless they can see it?

Yes - that is the acceptable minimum. People are trying to cheat you - whether they realise it or not - if they ask you to believe without at least that.

But how can that be extraordinary evidence - it is ordinary to see unusual things?

It is ordinary in itself. Extraordinary is a comparative concept . Something is only extraordinary in comparison to something else. We mean that ordinarily we would take a reliable person's word for it - but as what they claim is a magical or strange event or thing we need more than that - we need the extraordinary verification of seeing the magic or strange event or thing.

What happens if we oppose or ignore that principle?

We oppose truth and worse we do damage to people. People have a right to evidence. We are tricking them and cheating them of their right. We are lowering the standard of evidence required for miracles and opening the way for people to be led astray by fakers.

What does religion say about the rule, extraordinary claims should only be believed by those who have extraordinary evidence for them?

It shows its true colours by rejecting it.

Do we take the statements of scientists on faith and do scientists take the statement of other scientists on faith?

Yes. We trust that they have considered the evidence for their findings and did experiments properly. We trust that they have reported their findings accurately.

Does this faith mean that we should heed religious leaders and have faith in them?

No - unlike scientists they do not worry about evidence and they boast that they will never change their doctrines. They may however decide what they want to believe and just mention the evidence or seeming evidence that suits their ideas. Their faith is not based on evidence but they do this trick to make it look as if it is.

How do you prove that most religious faith is really just feeling not faith?
Because the believers cannot give adequate evidence for it.

Do those who disguise their feelings as faith tend to force religion on others?

Yes. They need to delude themselves. So they see unbelievers as a threat to their faith. They think they need the kind of faith they have and so they will not want unbelievers to take it away from them or undermine it so they think the unbelievers must be brought into line.

How does religion manipulate people?

It creates a need in them for religion - eg it may encourage fear of divine punishment or of offending God or condition people to be burdened by their "sins". Then they end up having to go to the religion for peace of mind. It is exploitation of the vulnerable.

What does the view that error has no rights imply?

It implies that if people have rights and their errors do not that they are getting grudging acceptance by how who say they accept them.

How do you respond to the thought: "If your belief - whether right or wrong - makes you a happier and kinder person, go for it!"?

The more error out there the harder it is to get at the truth. It puts a lot of confusion and clutter out there and prevents people exercising their right to find the truth. The person who feels and enjoys their perception that there is only one life and therefore we must enjoy it in helping others as much as possible is a grown-up. Only overgrown children feel that this position is not enough. They need personal development. They might be happier but their attitude is wrong so they are not reaching their zenith in happiness and kindness. Error harms.

If your kindness is based on error and wouldn't happen or be as intense without the error what does that say?

That you are bearing witness to error as a virtue and a good thing. You may not mean to be bad but you are objectively bad.

Is it true that even if our belief is based on evidence that the reason we accept the evidence is because we feel that it is true?

Yes for we know that evidence could be false evidence, or that we could be interpreting it incorrectly or we might be unaware of other evidence that points to a different conclusion.

Does religion having evidence for its claims being true mean we should believe?

No. There could be a faith that we don't know much about that has better evidence. Sometimes it is not the quantity of evidence that matters but the quality. Religious dogma is something believers are not allowed to deliberately change their minds about.

Is religious faith self-deception?

A religion could be true and you could still be using self-deception to believe in it. This would not be real belief for you would know at an inner level that the religion is either untrue or has no credibility because the evidence is poor.

Do religious leaders and religious teachers and religious promoters exploit the vulnerable?

Yes. Always.

Do we have a duty to follow the religion that teaches the truth?

Yes. If no religion teaches the truth then we should have no religion.