

LIVING ON HOPE NOT PIPE-DREAMS

Hope gets all but the most troubled of us out of bed every day.

It involves the hope that we can avoid some terrible harm.

It involves the hope that we can gain some good.

There are two sides then.

Neither side can be hoped for or attained without discernment. Evil sometimes wears a beautiful mask. The good can be the enemy of the best. You need to discern carefully and you need to call evil what it is. Don't pretend its anything less or less threatening than what it is.

Hope is your right and that right is why you need to do the deep questioning you are about to do.

Atheism for the purposes of this page means choosing not to accept or believe in God so that you can be God for yourself and others.

It does not matter how love is produced whether it is something you create out of nothing or something you make from already exists. For that reason God is over-rated. God is a denial of that truth.

Reason tells me that. Believers say that you cannot prove from reason that your brain works right so reason depends on assumptions. If trust in reason is based on making assumptions those assumptions are not like any other kind. They are assumptions we have to make and we are programmed to make them whether we like it or not. Assuming reason works is not the same as guessing that an apple has fallen from a tree. It is about getting a start not creating a circular argument. Reason when done carefully is always valid and nothing can take away its validity and value. The notion that you can only trust reason if you think a trustworthy and trusting God (God can't give it to you if you will only abuse it!) is out. It denies why we reason and why we need reason. It is really about making religion and God the custodian of reason. Reason that needs a custodian is not reason at all - it is not trusted. God is not God - of supreme importance when reason just is about giving us a start and does not need him.

Reason helps you to relate and learn from facts. Facts don't, can't and should not care about your feelings. That is why you must accept that in order to be able to hope.

Truth is just whatever is real. It is that simple. Truth is true and is not about us. Nothing can make truth untrue or just an opinion. God cannot do it either. What if hypothetically God could do it? Then we should defy him for at least if truth remains truth then we know we have to work with it for it cannot change. The idea that God should alone matter and get total love is incoherent. If you say, "I will not let you change truth even if you can and it is good of you to" you are saying, "I matter more than you. I make myself the priority." Or you might prefer to say, "We humans need fixed truth and I make humanity my priority then not you!"

Some tend to let reason be silence for they think we are all biased. But bias is our problem not reasons. Bias is a problem but many people are prone to it but less prone than others. No person is biased in everything. One person can be biased in politics but not biased at all in religion. Another may be biased in some political or religious matters but not others. For example, the Roman Catholic can be terribly biased as a historian and try to make out the bishop of Rome was always functionally the head of the Church but do a good hatchet job on the credibility of the resurrection of Jesus claims. Sometimes what looks like bias is in fact the person lying and living on the to hope that if a lie is promoted enough it will be taken for the truth or as good as the truth.

The danger is you can think you are not biased and be biased so you should welcome those who make you think and explain the reasons why you believe and why you think your beliefs are correct. The bias problem requires, no hesitation, that you choose testable beliefs and ideas. Non-testable beliefs are bias in its fully developed and most dangerous and irremediable form. God is one such belief for nobody can prove that the hope God supposedly gives personally to each person will happen tomorrow so its quite a cruel belief.

An argument by default asks the other person to believe that you are avoiding hidden assumptions. An argument is pointless if you can just assume instead and if a guess is as good as an argument. God and belief in him are mere assumptions to us

all. Even if there is a God that does not mean you are not assuming God.

Hope is linked to self-love. Self-love awakens hope. Atheists may say we should choose to love rather than be loved. How does that fit self-love? Choosing to love is choosing to be loved for you have to create love before you can get it.

The goal is to have a heart that is changed for the best.

Religion sees free will as a gift from God that allows you to choose to be all for him and be his instrument of his love. The downside is that you can rebel. For atheists, if free will exists then it is about the choice whether to look after yourself as being part of humanity as a group or about yourself only. The latter is what everybody wants it to be whether they admit it or not. So free will is an argument for atheism as a positive force.

We reject free will as in the ability to deserve to be punished or to be rewarded by God. There is no free will to deserve in that sense.

The argument that we are free agents and not just programmed entities is thought to show that we can trust what we think and sense. They say if you are a machine then you cannot be sure your programming is right for only chance produced it. But if we are indeed machines then this argument is no good. The argument already presumes we are not machines. We trust for our own sake alone and that is the one essential belief we have. We simply assume our minds work and can keep us right. "We trust our minds when they work as they should," is not a belief or choice. We cannot get away from it so the decision to accept it is forced on us. We also want it to be forced on us. Its fundamentally god-free.

Whether you believe in god or not, you have to believe that we are programmed by reality. If God is reality that is beside the point. It is still reality's programming that matters. It does not matter so much how it does it as long as it does it.

And it could be that reality programs us. Programming by definition has to at least try to conform to reality. If it gets it wrong it's wrong but is still an attempt to fit reality. So you can believe in reason and think free will is nonsense. So you don't need to believe in free will to commit to using reason.

Make up your mind if free will is important to you or not.

You need to believe what is true before you can get what you want. Without correct beliefs you risk settling for less, getting the wrong thing or losing the good things.

Many people who won't change their minds when proof or good evidence that they are wrong shows up may seem stubborn. Maybe they are. Maybe they think they have evidence that they are right. If so, they need guidance to see if their evidence really is evidence.

The right to test and question is the most fundamental human right of all. The principle that examining and testing is the most important principle of all and other principles arise from it.

Life cannot function if we are not allowed to question those who say that starving yourself to death earns you a place in Paradise.

The true humanist then stands in opposition to revealed religion and must kindly and firmly help others to see that it is wrong. The right to help others protect themselves and learn requires it.

Atheism helps develop a mature hope and this is done more easily if you know others like you.

Atheism is the way to true compassion but how do you invite others unto this path?

ITS SIMPLE: Ask the person what would change their minds about their faith or cherished view. Ask what would make them question the goodness of the belief and its truth, There is nothing disrespectful in that. It is only true way to respect a belief.

We must ask not for faith or belief but commitment.

The rule with opinion is that when you hear one try to think of an opposing one so that you keep your thinking clear and don't end up promoting somebody's opinions instead of thinking for yourself.

Like attracts like. This is not that you can draw things into your life by mere thoughts but that you draw them into your life by giving to others so that the good you want is attracted into your life.

I see the awesome good in people as people. If they are religious I do not see that but see the good. Religious or not, their good is their product and theirs alone. And it is what anybody can aspire to without religion or God.

Avoid being humanist as in label. Be a descriptive humanist. Your atheism and your humanism are not labels but describe a reality - you are atheist and you are humanist.

Peaceful protests to advertise our rights as human beings in the face of god-based oppression are important. Even our silence presence speaks. It is more important to assert our rights and in that way promote the truth than to promote the truth in an argumentative way. The atheist has the right to be integrated in society and to feel integrated and thus if somebody is a person of faith as in thinking God alone matters that is the atheist's business.

Suffering is a threat to hope.

Suffering is an unavoidable reality that must be accepted and we must always be open to being confident to face it even if we are not. That way it cannot take away your hope completely. Hope can become small but quickly surge. Hope is the way to let more hope come. The goal is to feel you are God over how you react to what happens to you and in you and to be that God.

The person who helps a suffering person or animal while not caring if there is a reward from God or about God's approval or even about God's existence is the best person. They are all about the suffering.

Most of us when we suffer can tell ourselves, "At least I am alive", and mean it.

Evil people are a threat to hope.

There is no evil as in acts that mean a person is evil inside. There are only mistakes and mental problems. Responsibility for what you do does not mean you ever need to judge yourself as evil.

Religion says that evil is not real - its good that is not good enough. Can the atheist hold that evil is a thing? Yes - in relation to huge evil and violence and to suffering. Should he wish she could hold that? Yes if it means his motivation will be optimised. There is great strength of will in the person who sees evil as a real power that he or she can overcome. The notion that evil is just a confused good implies that it just burns itself out so action is not really that necessary.

Atheists see evil as just being there though it should not be and they do all they can about it. They do not condone it in any way or say it is part of a good plan or intended by anyone. The believer sees evil as intended indirectly by God and as part of a plan for good to triumph. Who is taking the least risk? What is the risk?

Have the hope to refuse to take the risk of condoning evil.

We reject the notion that suffering or evil ever result in good. What does result in good is your refusal to let it win.

The good that follows evil is not a result but mere luck.

We must see and feel that if people suffer and die for a purpose that is itself evil. Why? Because it validate the notion of necessary evil. That idea though necessary at times does in fact lend itself to such a risk of abuse that it is terrifying. An evil can be made to look necessary or circumstances can be manipulated to make it necessary.

Choice gives you a sense of power and control. It may be a real sense or not.

What you pretend you are or act as if you are sort of becomes real. Get into the mode of simulating that you choose what happens to you every moment good or bad. You are like the God or universe creating your circumstances from nothing. That way you feel powerful and strong and less afraid. You will start to feel that good is always on your side even in the face of the mightiest evil. A hopeful courage will be the fruit.

No matter what happens or how terrible it is, the important thing is that you hold on to a sense of agency and not let yourself become helpless or passive. Be a victim but not in a boastful way. For example being a proud survivor of a disaster degrades those who die and is being separatist towards those who feel no pride.

God only gets a chance at being morally justifiable belief if he really exists and if faith in him necessarily stops things getting worse and makes them either the same or better. A belief that is not necessarily of any benefit is not worth the stress put on it. Feeling you create rather than God has to give better results than trusting in another person, God to do it. God is

not you.

Magic and miracles are threats to you and you need to see them that way. A sceptic is not a scoffer but a checker. It just happens that the checking out shows nothing really supernatural happened. The miracle is a threat for it worries not about saving your life when terminal illness should kill you but some other issue. Eg rosary praying or something. The notion that an all-knowing and infallible God who cannot lie or err exists is intrinsically bad. It means that the believer in principle and/or practice has beliefs that are factually correct. That is like creating alternative facts (lies) if God has not spoken. Divine revelation is fundamentally evil because if God says something and there is no evidence that he has spoken or is right then you are asked to depend solely on trust. And there never is good enough evidence. You end up with no right to say God has not spoken or that God is wrong. There is no right to withdraw trust or simply fail to trust. You cannot speak for somebody else – that is their job. It is God's job to speak for God not you. Thus if you speak for God and say he did say something you expose yourself as a fraud. If you speak for God and say God did not say it then you admit to a trust issue and that is a sin so you have no right to say it. Religions then that claim to be revealed by God then need to be met with scepticism by the outsider.

I have faith not in spite of the fact that there is nobody magical looking after me but because of it. I have faith I will be okay for I usually am and I will want and need to preserve and nurture that faith. Religion robs me of that.

Death seems to quench hope in the end. Death seems to be the end of our loving relationships. It is not. Love is not about time and space. The love of a parent is the love of your whole life and is not about time. Your loved one dies. You are devastated and the pain is often too much to bear. But what if you had a time machine which lets you be with your departed one? Even if you could only meet her occasionally when she is a baby that would make you feel very different. You would move on remarkably.

Religion creates a need for God and an all consuming one so someone who tries religion but gets no benefit may be driven by angst about his place in the universe to blow himself up as a martyr.

All that matters is loving good. Loving God is not the same as loving good. Love yourself and others and that is how you love good. Even loving God presupposes that it is good you love.

Good does not need an authority to advise or or command it. It does not govern or rule but merely attracts. A good that needs authority and has none of its own and has to get it from a God or something is not really good at all. That is why God must go.

What do we want commands from God for? Some say a command is neither good or bad – it is only the content that is good or bad. But it is bad to command. Doing good just because it is lovely is the right way. Doing it for you are told is not. It is failure to see good as good.

What God stands for should make us angry. Anger can be good when handled with maturity. The ideal is to be so enraged that you will give money and time to helping others wherever possible. Even if you fall short you need to be supported in seeing it as the ideal.

Are atheists looking back at the past and deciding that there cannot be a God because of all the evil and suffering that has happened? Doing that leads to them being accused of being arrogantly biased for you need to see the whole picture. But what else are we supposed to do? No other way is possible. We look at the past to assess human nature and how bad it is so we should do the same with God and a God would have to expect us to. He commands things so he should command that. Also to look at the past that way could be a way of checking if human nature is guilty of creating the idea of a God that they would accept allowing all that evil to happen. There is the God angle and what God belief says about believers. It seems that believers hold that the atheist cannot look back and say that anything could have been different if there is a God. That is an evil thing to hold. It is more about respecting god ideology than caring about suffering and shows total disrespect to the atheist.

If all is just natural and mechanical and there is no God then the person who has fed you on rotting chicken because there was nothing else was being a bigger and better person than the situation allowed. But if there is a God of surprises and the unexpected then you cannot be sure of that. God controls the situation and there is a bigger picture that he is working on so the person is NOT that restricted by the situation then after all!

There is no power greater than yourself. You are the power greater than yourself. I have the power to transcend my suffering and faults. Self-transcendence is a reality. But if it is not happening where is it? Believe it is working deep inside you and that you will see the fruit in its own time. The knowledge that transcendence is possible should encourage you to face whatever happens and to do the right thing no matter how unpopular it will be and to feel that your help of others will bring lasting results. Inspiring people to have the knowledge is the most important good work you can do and you will

never see or know how good it has been. It makes you sure that if you help somebody that the help is not temporary but they will be helped until the day they cease to exist.

Meaning in life is linked to hope. I get meaning from deciding what meaning will be. Religion says that if God or something bestows meaning on me I have to accept it. That idea should cause us to rebel and resist. A meaning that is not mine but his is not meaning. It is like medication. It is like an anti-depressant or something. It cannot truly satisfy.

If I have to take meaning from God in order to have meaning then that is like, "Take this or suffer". That is no way to get real meaning. It treats God as a dispenser of antidepressant grace and who has no bedside manner but is a bully.

Imagine if I am meant to get meaning from winning a million pounds. The meaning is no good unless I take it. Taking it is more important than winning. Is it the taking that gives the meaning not God? In a sense it is! It blames me if I feel depression. The threats around God and meaning show that if I don't have depression then I should have!

You need the "meaning" part of happiness to give you a sense of purpose in life, and you need the "pleasure" part of happiness to give you a sense of joy or well-being in the present moment. Both are necessary ingredients in the happiness nectar.

If your system and your psychological makeup will give you meaning given time or if you let them and stop trying then God is a threat. God is about trying to get what you can have without him.

A lot of hopelessness is about fear of our own feelings. We feel bad and the feelings will not go away,

If you say you don't know why you feel the way you do and you just do then you need to ask how you ended up feeling that way and what you feel. Do that and the why will become clear in due course. This is extremely important because if you start to believe that you will develop feelings with no explanation that is telling yourself that you can do nothing about it.

You cannot change your feelings just like that. It takes time. But you can always change your attitude to your feelings easily. No shortcuts please such as prayer or God. They are not shortcuts but false promises.

Happiness is more than simply feeling pleasure and avoiding pain. Happiness is about having experiences that are meaningful and valuable, including emotions that you think are the right ones to have. All emotions can be positive in some contexts and negative in others, regardless of whether they are pleasant or unpleasant.