

IS ATHEISM A WORLD VIEW?

Is atheism a world view? At its core it does not need to be but you can build a worldview on it.

Most atheists say atheism is not a belief or denial of God but just a lack of belief. This is negative atheism. It can grow into denial. Then we have positive atheism - the clear belief that atheism is true. Negative atheism can grow into positive atheism, belief in atheism, but atheism is itself not a belief so it is not a worldview. Religion says that atheism is a belief and a worldview and that those atheists are confusing agnosticism with atheism.

Lacking belief in God in itself is not atheism but if this lack indirectly implies there is no God then it is atheism. To lack belief in God is to lack belief in his importance to you and thus is not the same as lacking faith in the leprechaun down the road. To deny divine importance is a belief.

Religion likes to argue that atheism is religious for atheism has a worldview. Many atheists do have a worldview but few share the exact same worldview. There is freethinking among atheists. Atheism does not involve the supernatural or magic so it is not religious. No two members of the same religion will have exactly the same world view though there is in general higher agreement on the worldview among members of a religion than disagreement. Does it follow then that they are two religions pretending to be one religion? Maybe for two separate religions can have nearly everything in common and still be different and distinct.

Atheists believe that they must be open in everything to changing their minds should the evidence be sufficient to justify a change of view. There is no trace of the religious attitude, "You must believe this and never deny it. It is the revealed truth from on high." Religion is a threat to truth and transparency in principle.

From Frank Turek's Stealing from God:

Quote: Atheism is a worldview with beliefs just as much as theism is a worldview with beliefs. (A "worldview" is a set of beliefs about the big questions in life, such as: What is ultimate reality? Who are we? What's the meaning of life? How should we live? What's our destiny? etc.)

My comment: Atheism is simply about God. The consequence of that belief follow from atheism but are not atheism. How we should live? is the main part of a worldview but it does not follow that God or atheism helps with that question. It is the fact that we know that we have to work with - our future destiny if any is not what we are working with and in now. For more than a thousand years Judaism got by without worrying about us having any destiny other than death. Concern about the afterlife was only made part of the faith much later. There is no reason to agree with Turek that a worldview is about the things he lists. For some it is just about how we live. For gnostics it is just about our destiny. For theists it may be just about cherishing God - Jesus said to love God for his own sake and to love others only to please God so it is really only God who is loved. This doctrine makes other things pale into virtual nothingness. We should speak of worldviews not worldview. Each thing Turek lists is a worldview. He cannot call a collection of worldviews a worldview.

DOES IT TAKE FAITH FOR YOU TO BE AN ATHEIST?

Uh, no!

Belief is just agreement that something seems to be true but when it involves commitment to that something on the personal level then it is faith. Faith is not belief but faith is grounded in belief. The bad side of faith is that it risks commitment to something that might be false or unworthy and tends to pay lip service to evidence.

In a sense belief in God without faith is atheist in the sense that God's authority is being denied and a God with no authority is not a God.

Atheism is at its core, the absence of belief in God just as sickness is the absence of health or black is the absence of white.

So the atheist may not say there is no God but will have no belief that there is.

Atheists do not wonder what created the universe or where the universe came from. They admit ignorance instead of pretending that God is the answer. Even if God could make sense as an explanation it does not mean that it is reasonable to believe in God.

Believers in God say that it takes more faith to be an atheist than a believer. Interestingly that implies that faith is a

problematic thing and its benefit and goodness is doubtful. If faith is a bad thing then it is not admirable to be an atheist for that demands too much faith. If faith in God is better that can only because we have to have faith in something and it must be something that does not use more faith than necessary. It treats faith as a sad and regrettable evil that we must instil and live with.

WHY SAY NEGATIVE ATHEISM IS A RELIGIOUS VIEW?

The reason believers in God accuse atheists who lack a belief in God of believing in atheism is because they want to argue, "Atheism just like belief in God is a belief or a faith position." They want to make the world suspect that atheism is a religion. They want atheists to suffer the same disadvantages any religion will suffer in a state that ignores religion and refuses to implement religious doctrine or principles. It does not bother them that if atheism is a religion then everything is a religion so if the state and religion should be separate then secularism is unworkable. They want the state to reason that atheism is a religion and thus a violation of the separation that should exist between Church and state. But what do they want to take its place? Christianity? Do they want to destroy secularism and leave us with nothing but totalitarianism? They are certainly willing to stop the state acting neutral on the issues of God and religion - they oppose this atheism which is atheism in practice.

IS NEGATIVE ATHEISM A MORAL VIEW?

If atheism is primarily or essentially an absence of belief in God or Gods, then explaining ethics, morality and altruism is not its job. If God is somehow morality then atheism is not about morality. If God is not morality then atheism is still not about morality. Atheism does not explain why we approve of some actions and not others. But atheism is a moral view in one sense: it sees that rights emerge from needs. God by definition can have no needs so he has no right or need to give us moral commands. Atheism may be a lack of belief in God who commands. Not believing in God implies opposition to God. It is indirect opposition. Rejecting God is direct opposition. Negative atheism indirectly rejects but is not inherently anti-God. Positive atheism directly rejects and is inherently anti-God.

FINALLY

A world view is a collection of direct ideas and atheism that is merely a lack of belief is not a worldview in that sense. The lack may suggest indirectly believing there is no God but that does not suggest a worldview.