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Why Religion Got in the Way



6.4k

September 10, 2014 By Tim Urban



6.4k

For those readers frustrated with the late posts, [Why I Can't Post On Time](#).



Wash your face before bed so the angels will come down and kiss you while you sleep.”

That’s what my grandmother told me when I was a child staying over at her house. I was about five years old, and not only did this information from a trusted authority not faze me, it was a very standard sort of thing for someone to tell me.

I was the first child in a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too Reform Jewish family who also did Christmas and Easter. Being born into that situation set me up to be told the following:

- Once a year, an obese middle-aged man breaks into our house in the least efficient way possible, leaves a bunch of wrapped gifts for me, and then instead of just walking out the door, decides to work his way back up the chimney, where he’s then carried off by a group of large, wingless, flying mammals to do the same thing over a billion other times in a span of a few hours
- On Passover, an invisible man breaks into the house silently while we’re all eating because he wants to drink a small glass of wine
- That same week, a 10-foot-tall sentient rabbit breaks into the house, possibly by morphing through the wall, and puts a bunch of chocolate eggs that he laid all over the place for no apparent reason
- When one of my teeth falls out, if I put it under my pillow, a flying woman will break into my bedroom while I’m sleeping and buy the tooth from me for an amount of her choosing
- Let’s add in that no one ever explained that fiction exists, so I assumed that all Sesame Street creatures were actual biological things that existed in the wild

So flying people breaking into my room to molest me while I slept because I washed my face? Fuckin sure, why not. It was a totally ordinary thing to happen—this exact kind of shit happened constantly in my world.

All this information came as part of the same orientation that taught me English, told me what shapes and colors were and how to poop, and explained that it’s bad to stare at really short adults.

It was a lot of information, but I was handling it well, when suddenly I was hit with a disturbing twist. I began to be told, about certain parts of my reality, “Oh yeah no that’s totally false.” Wait. What? I’m a complete amateur at this, and busting my ass trying to gain knowledge and skills, and they’ve been fucking with me? Not only that, I learn that all the fun things are fake and all the mundane things are real.

The more questions I asked, the more of a mindfuck this huge web of lies turned out to be. Dragons are fake but dinosaurs are real. Kings and princesses are real but wizards and fairies are fake. Disney World is real but not Sesame Street. Farm animals do exist but they’re disgusting, base creatures who act and look nothing like they do in fiction. Pirates and Indians are both real but in much less cartoony and racist ways than I’m used to, while witches and ghosts are fake altogether. Touching a toad doesn’t give me warts, my eyes won’t get stuck if I cross them, and no, Michael Dukakis is not a viable candidate despite his 20-1 landslide victory in my first grade classroom poll.

Only able to trust myself from then on, I created two buckets in my brain for “fake” and “real” and started dropping all new information into one or the other.

If there was anything without a clear bucket, I asked someone about it, and one day I asked my dad about God. “Some people believe in God and others don’t, and everyone has to make that decision for themselves.” Yeah nope. Clear fake bucket answer. And from then on, I was an atheist. To seven-year-old Tim, this wasn’t any bolder than saying I was an a-Santa-ist or an a-fairies-ist—I had become cynical about all things that seemed out-of-this world after so many had been revealed to be fake. I developed an “If it seems too fun to be true, it is” rule, and why was there any reason to assess God differently than all the other supernatural characters?

The only thing that was confusing was why my dad hadn’t just come out and admitted that God was fake like he had with so many other things. Why had he been weird about it?

This became even more perplexing as I got older. The “If it seems too fun to be true, it is” rule had hardened into a complete rejection of anything that didn’t fit with the laws of nature. Every single life experience I had had backed this up, so why would I ever question it? And the world agreed with me—with one exception. Most of the Jews I knew believed in God. So did most of the Christians. People older, wiser, and smarter than me believed. Even people who weren’t totally convinced seemed uncomfortable talking about it. I found very few people who would just say, “Of course I don’t believe in God.”

Why was everyone being so weird about this? *What the hell was going on?*

The more I learned, the more I realized my whole country disagreed with me—I’d [read that](#) 96% of Americans believed in God, 90% believed in Heaven, 73% believed in Hell, [almost half](#) believed in the Bible literally—talking snake, Noah’s Ark, people living to like 200, etc.—and 61% believed that “a democracy cannot survive without a widespread belief in God or a Supreme Being.” I learned that the deeply religious even included a number of science-minded geniuses like Isaac Newton. Meanwhile, atheist was a bad thing to be, something derogatory, something to keep your mouth shut about, especially if you ever wanted to [run for office](#).

What started as an earnest frustration that I couldn’t understand so many other people’s core inspirational force turned into total shutdown on the subject by college. Anything having to do with the world of the supernatural—God, higher powers, spirituality—was *not* for me. As for Judaism, I happily joined the family for holidays, ate the chocolate coins, and became skilled at eating Chinese food with chopsticks, but the Torah? Not interested. On top of my rejection of divinity, I didn’t like the way organized religions behaved. Where I saw science being humble, collaborative, constantly under revision, and forward-marching, I saw religion being arrogant, divisive, hostile to change, and obsessed with the past. I graduated college as a staunch atheist with the kind of arrogance only a 21-year-old has the naiveté to feel.

What I missed at the time is that “atheist” isn’t something. It’s just “not something.” By declaring myself an atheist and calling it a day, I was basing my whole spiritual identity on what I *wasn’t*. Yes, I’m an atheist, but I’m also not from Uganda. If someone asked me where I’m from, answering “Not Uganda” would be unhelpful. Likewise, if my only spiritual identity is, “I don’t believe in the divine components of the world’s large, ancient religions,” that makes me a spiritual nothing.

At the time, of course, I saw no problem with being a spiritual nothing. Spirituality was for religious people, and I was a science guy, so who cared anyway?

What I didn’t realize is that I had inadvertently flushed down the toilet a critical part of the human growth experience.

What Is Spirituality?

There’s almost no word ickier than *spirituality*. It’s vague, amorphous, somehow very annoying, and it manages to turn off both the religious and the non-religious. And if you gather five people who all say they’re actually fond of spirituality, they’ll be defining the term in five different ways.

So what exactly is spirituality, as we’re using the word today, and what do we need from it?

Ever since the human species began opening its eyes into consciousness, it has been an aggressively curious child, hungry to figure it all out. What was this world it was living in, and what did it all mean?

The first part of that question—What was this world?—became the job of science. The second part—What does it all mean?—is the job of spirituality.

Science is what we know, and spirituality is how we coexist philosophically, psychologically and emotionally with that knowledge. Science gives us the information; spirituality helps us wrap our heads around it. The two lead us as a tag team, each taking care of their critical halves of the “figuring it all

out” puzzle—when science tells us something shocking, like “The Earth is revolving around the sun and not vice versa!” we turn, wide-eyed, to spirituality and ask, “How does that change things? How does that transform the way we should think about ourselves, about the world, and about life?”

Under this definition, spirituality is a secular concept, and the idea that spirituality and science are diametrically opposed to each other is incorrect—they’re two halves of the same quest. As usual, Carl Sagan [says it best](#):

“Spirit” comes from the Latin word “to breathe.” What we breathe is air, which is certainly matter, however thin. Despite usage to the contrary, there is no necessary implication in the word “spiritual” that we are talking of anything other than matter (including the matter of which the brain is made), or anything outside the realm of science...Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. When we recognize our place in an immensity of light years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the intricacy, beauty and subtlety of life, then that soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility combined, is surely spiritual...The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both.

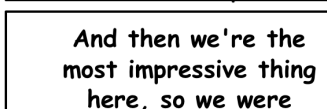
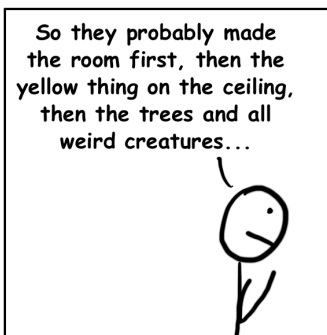
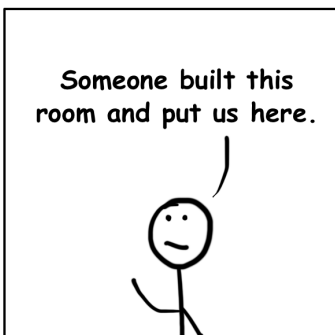
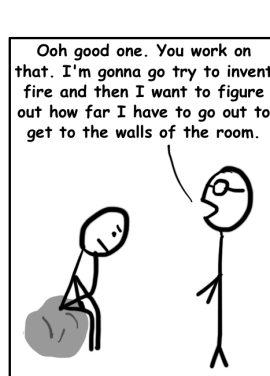
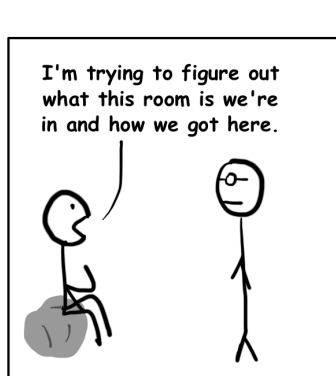
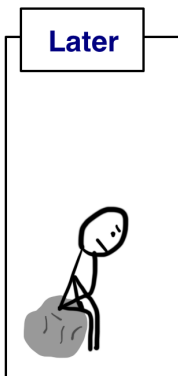
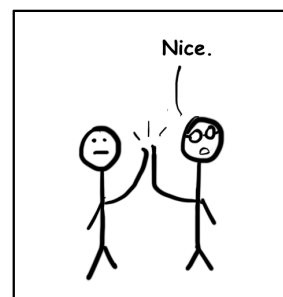
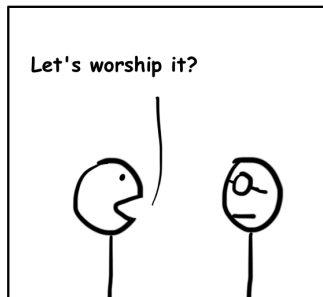
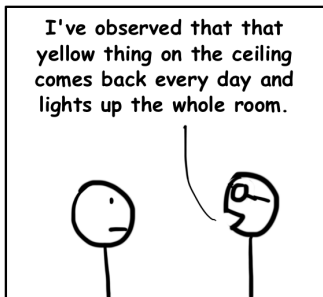
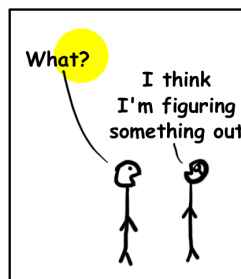
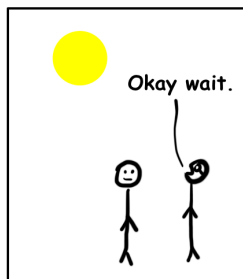
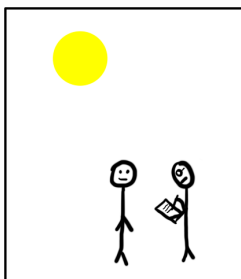
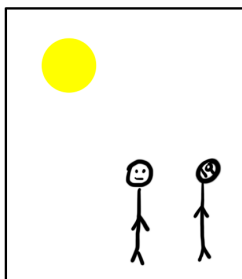
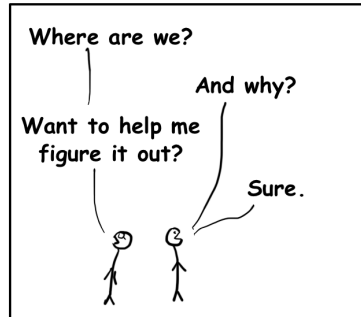
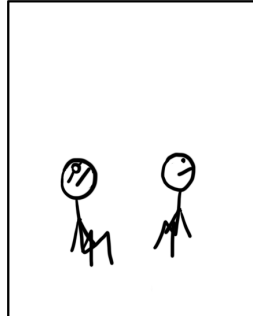
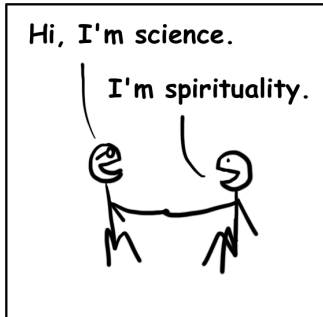
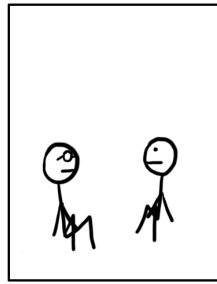
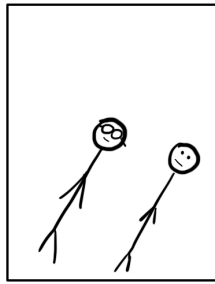
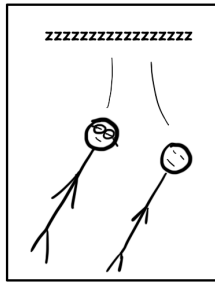
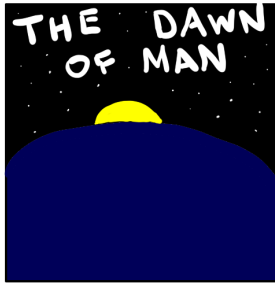
As humanity continues to learn, science and spirituality should be collaborative, innovative, and forever marching forward in a state of continual evolution as new developments emerge. Science opens pathways for humans to reach higher levels of consciousness and wisdom, but only through the spiritual realm can we grow into those pathways.

On a day-to-day level, one of the greatest challenges facing most humans is the quest to avoid living in an unconscious fog—this fog is where you are when you make big life decisions for small-minded reasons, when you short-sightedly side-step your own integrity, when you continually prioritize the wrong things over the right things, settle for mediocrity out of fear, or waste huge amounts of your precious time procrastinating. And this is one issue science can’t help with—an unconscious fog can only be combated through spiritual growth.

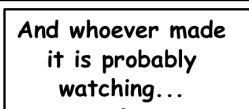
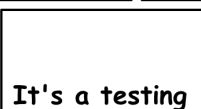
Defined this way, not only is spirituality an acceptable and desirable realm to have in our lives, it is *vital* in order for humans to grow, thrive, and take fullest advantage of their brain power.

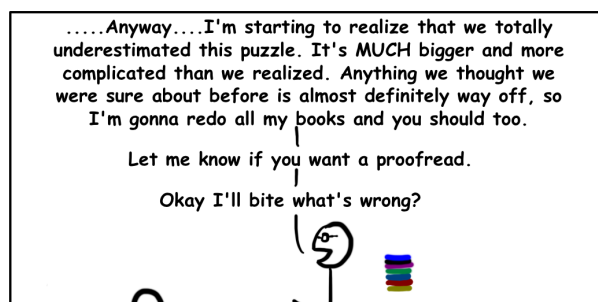
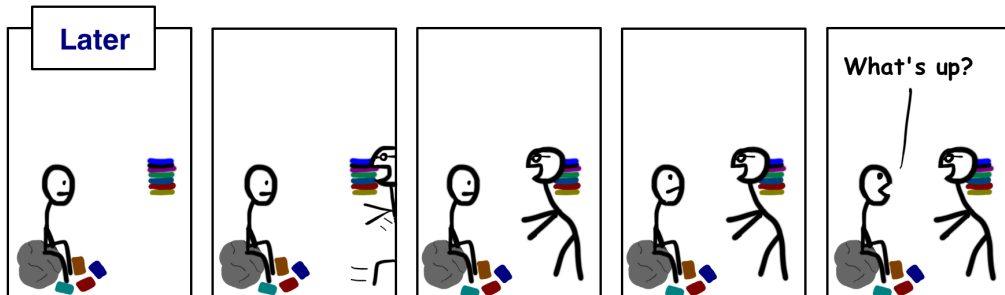
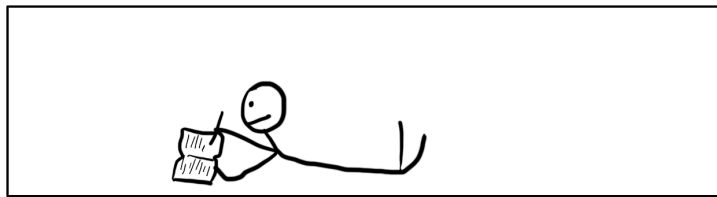
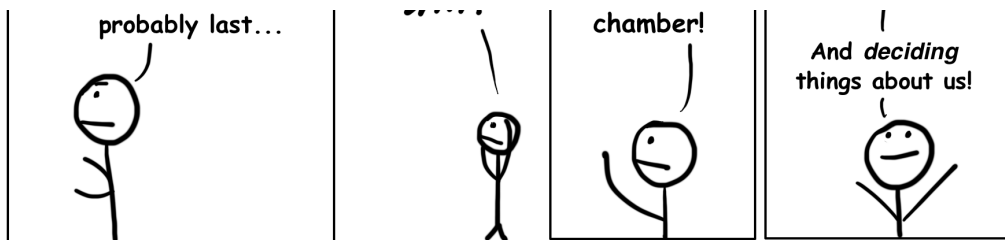
So why is spiritual growth given so little serious attention in today’s world? What happened to that half of our exploration that spirituality is supposed to cover?

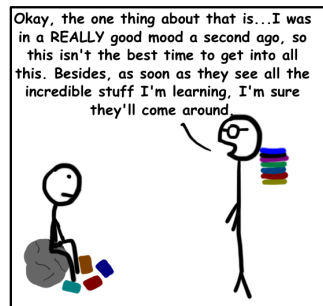
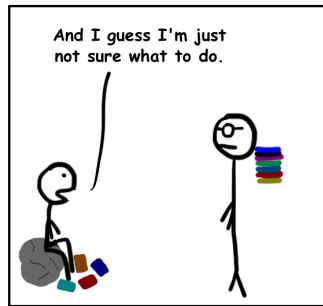
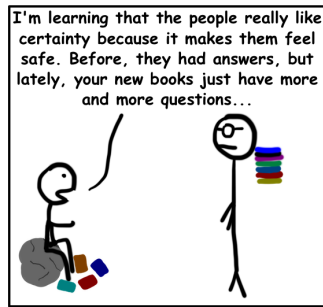
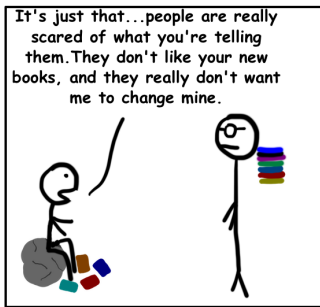
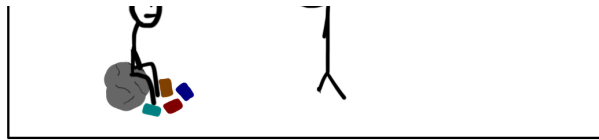
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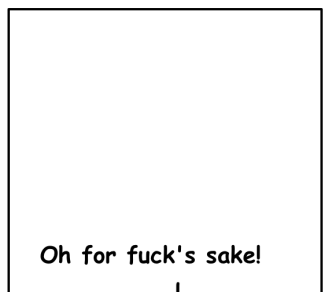
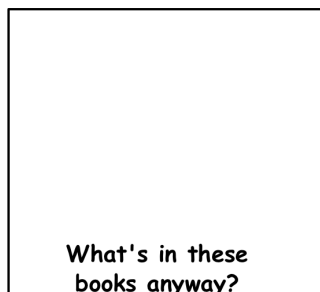
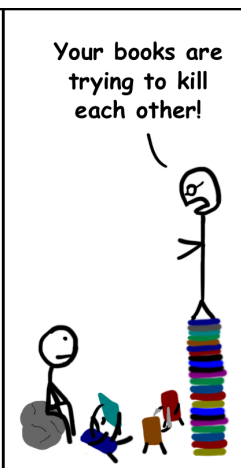
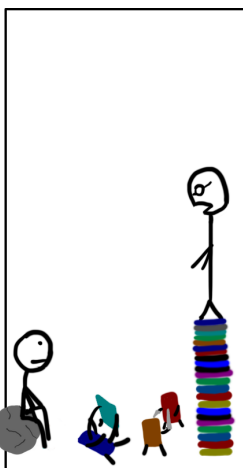
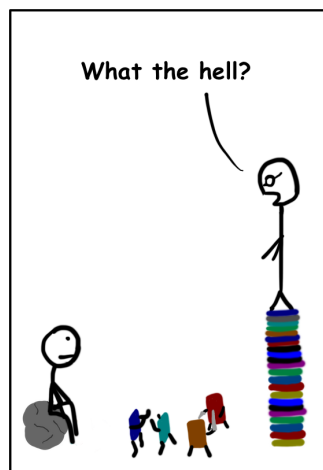
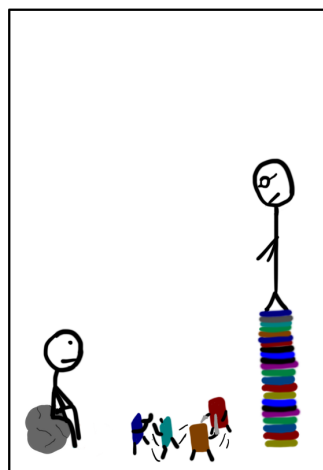
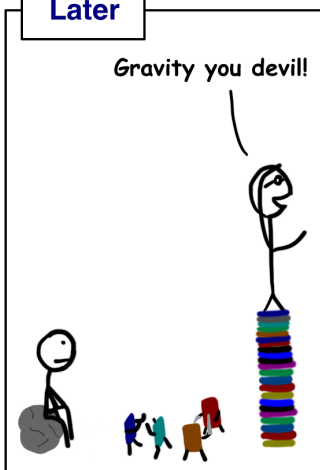
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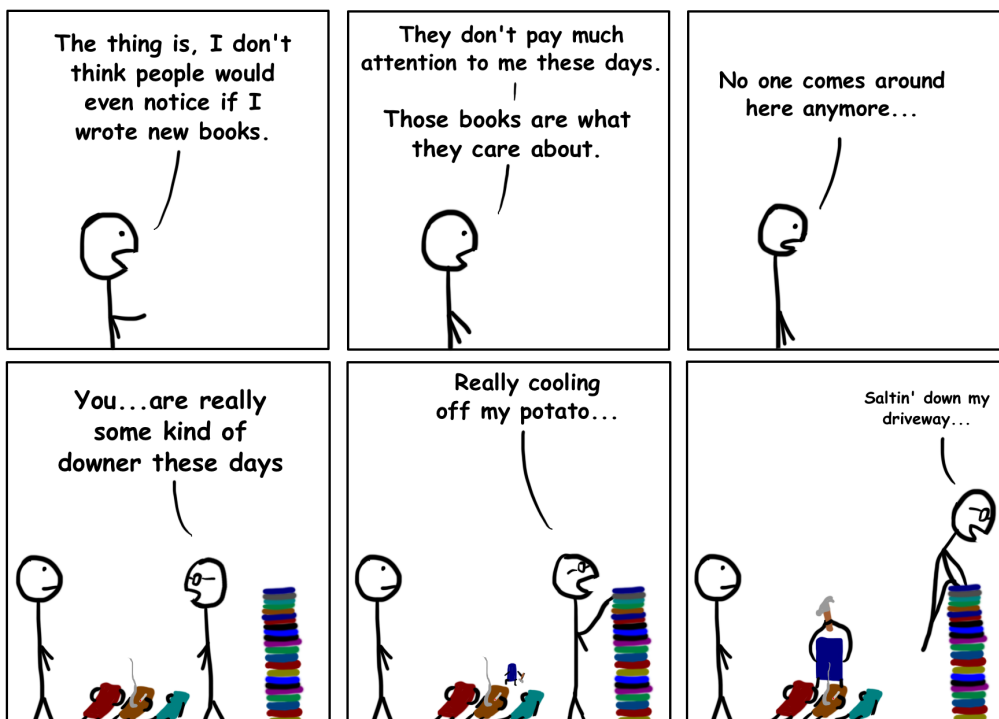
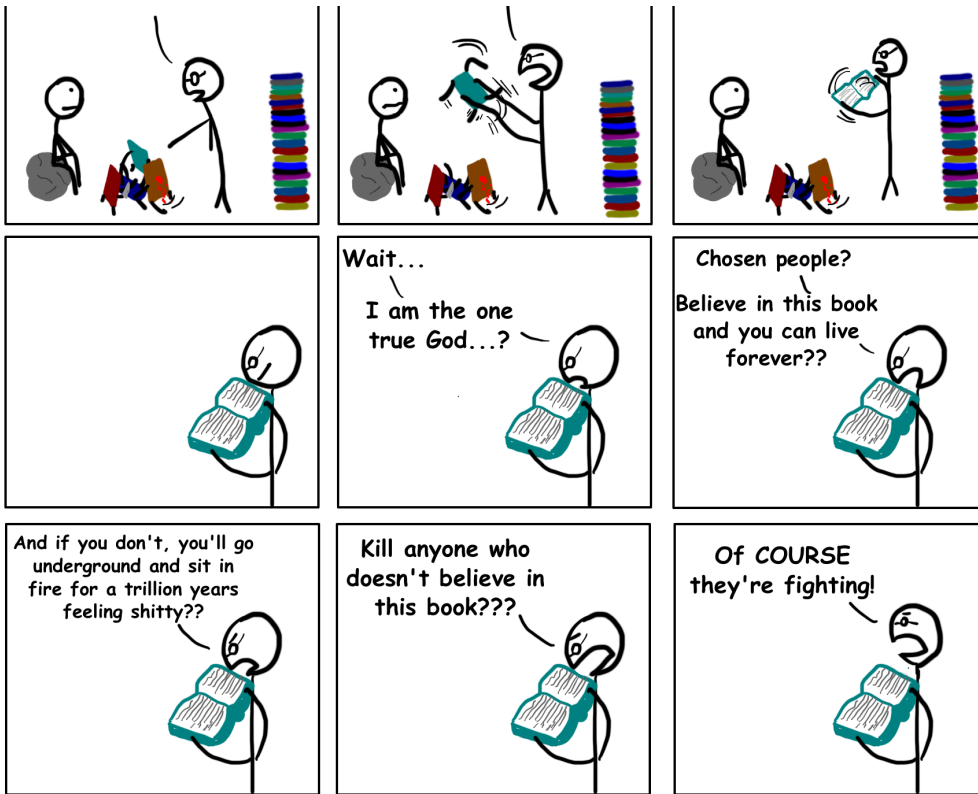






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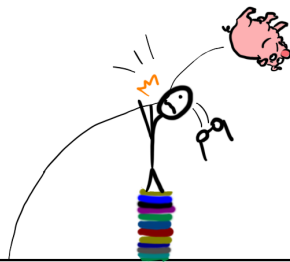




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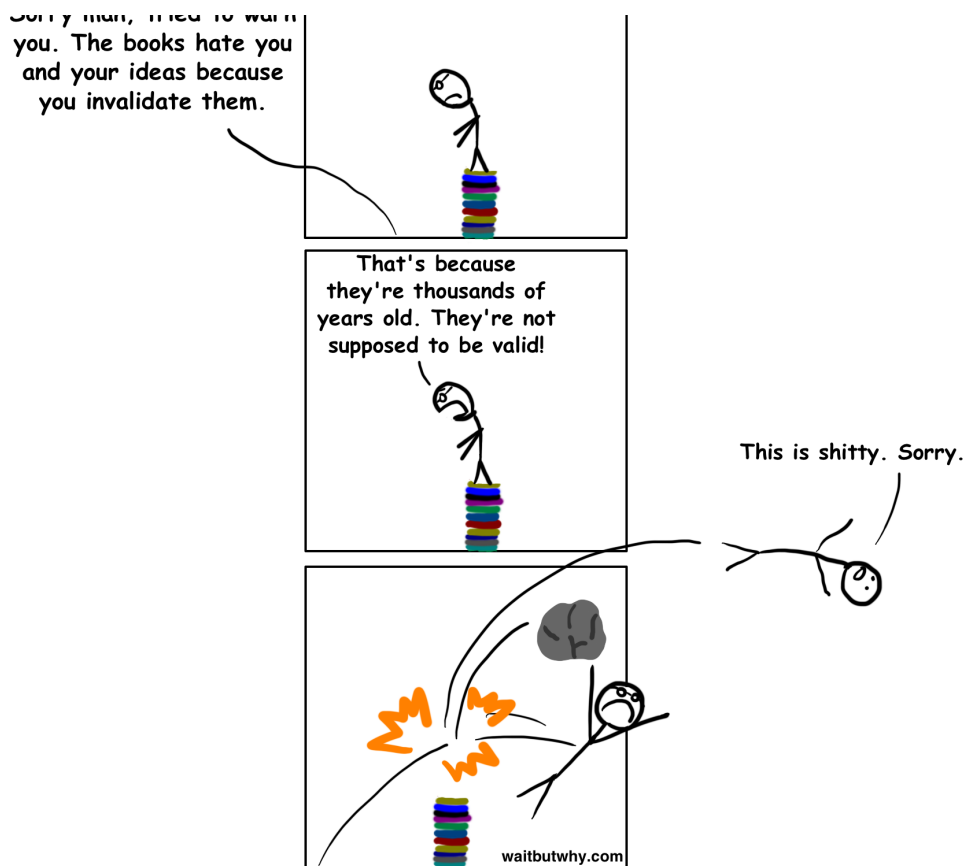
That's cool but you
might wanna...



What the fuck
was that??!



Sorry man, tried to warn



That's what I think happened to our spiritual realm—it got elbowed out of relevance and into the fringes by religion, for a bunch of reasons:

- **Fear.** Religion grabs people by the fear and pulls them into its bosom of definitive answers and immortality. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be doing a convincing job—a [recent study](#) found that how close you feel to God [makes no difference in your overall life satisfaction](#). If I were told right now that I could live forever and I believed it, I'd be *far, far, far* happier than I am as I type this sentence. If a religious person isn't happier than I am, I refuse to believe that they're convinced about God.
- **An evolutionary inclination toward tribalism.** Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt [explains it](#) well:

I mean that we evolved to see sacredness all around us and to join with others into teams that circle around sacred objects, people and ideas. This is why politics is so tribal. Politics is partly profane, it's partly about self-interest. But politics is also about sacredness. It's about joining with others to pursue moral ideals. It's about the eternal struggle between good and evil, and we all believe we're on the side of the good.

This is only a speculative theory, but it has a lot of backing in the social sciences. And it makes sense. Believing in something bigger than yourself and bonding with your tribesmen over it is going to make you more cooperative, and over time, those tribes will thrive over those who aren't as inclined towards sacred things. Cooperation is a magnificent species survival tool for ants and bees, so why not for people too?


- **An evolutionary inclination toward belief in the divine.** A similar type of not-totally-proven theory to the one above, this suggests that human tribes who happened to be more inclined to believe in the divine will be more honest, altruistic, and cooperative, because they believe they're being watched. Over time, those tribes will fare better—i.e. those are our ancestors, not the atheist tribes. ¹
- **Sigmund Freud [believed that](#) many humans seek God to serve as a strong father figure.** ²

Against those forces, subtle, secular spirituality didn't stand a chance of making it to the big stage. But religion also caused it to suffer on the small, individual stage. Spirituality has often been neglected by

both the non-religious—because they group it, unfairly, into the “not for me” pile as part of their rejection of religion—and by the religious—because they rely on their religion for spiritual growth, and religions aren’t typically focused on the types of spirituality we’ve been discussing.

But we just established above that spiritual growth is important—*really* important—so now what?

What we need are good, simple, accessible, non-annoying, long-lasting ways to approach spirituality as individuals. I believe that starts with a spiritual framework that clicks with you and that you can turn to as your spiritual guide. And I happen to have one in mind that’s been working pretty well for me (and which is plastered all over this blog in post after post, inadvertently). We’ll discuss in [the next post](#).

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BVS • 3 months ago

In the article about AI on this same website the following was written:

"If our meager brains were able to invent wifi, then something 100 or 1,000 or 1 billion times smarter than we are should have no problem controlling the positioning of each and every atom in the world in any way it likes, at any time—everything we consider magic, every power we imagine a supreme God to have will be as mundane an activity for the ASI as flipping on a light switch is for us. Creating the technology to reverse human aging, curing disease and hunger and even mortality, reprogramming the weather to protect the future of life on Earth—all suddenly possible. Also possible is the immediate end of all life on Earth. As far as we're concerned, if an ASI comes to being, there is now an omnipotent God on Earth"

Now, assuming the ASI would not stop there and would continue to evolve, isn't it possible (likely even?) that the ASI would eventually become so advanced and so powerful as to be able to create it's own universe and dictate the laws therein? If so, is it really so hard to believe that there there could be an almighty and powerful God?

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Jason Fairchild  **BVS** • 3 months ago

It is hard to believe things without evidence for them.

You're right that ASI thought experiments can lead to the possibility that we are the sims of some far greater intelligence that programmed our universe, but just because this is possible does not make it

easy to believe.

Believe it if you want to, but unless you've found easter eggs left by the devs, or bugs in the code, it doesn't seem entirely reasonable.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



A Real God And Jesus Hater • 6 months ago

Both God and Jesus suck altogether since many of us innocent people are suffering on this rotten no good earth as it is for No Reason at all.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Laura • 8 months ago

As a person who also became an 'atheist' at a very young age, I understand the point the author is making. However, there are many people who do physically believe in a God, and maybe this should of also been catered to those people, because most of them, my parents included, have reasonable beliefs. Although I do not necessarily believe their beliefs are illogical, we also can't prove a God doesn't exist anyway, and that side of religion wasn't really discussed in this article.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Dennis the Canuck → **Laura** • 6 months ago

I cannot prove that unicorn do not exist. Nor can I prove that Bertrand Russell's flying teapot does not exist somewhere between Earth and the moon. I both cases this does not prove that the teapot or unicorns exist.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



David Boge → **Dennis the Canuck** • 6 months ago

That logic does not work anywhere

Take me for an example, the most important reason why I am staying as christian is simply that the new testament was written by several people (not just one) (heck, there are even more stuff outside the bible). The "books" inside the new testament is simply a witness.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Dennis the Canuck → **David Boge** • 6 months ago

Instead of using a teapot in my previous reply, I could have used god. I cannot prove that god exists, but that does not mean that god does exist. It is the believers (like you) who must prove the existence of a god. Without that proof then I am entitled to reject the notion that god exists, just as I am entitled to reject the notion that Bertrand Russell's flying teapot exists.

As to your second point, it is puzzling that you believe the bible because it purports to record history. In that case you seem to be saying that you should believe all history books - even when some historical claims are proven to be wrong. That seem like a weak reason for faith in Christianity (or any religion).

I also notice that you have conveniently ignored the old testament. If the Bible claims to be the words of god, then no one should be able to discard a huge part of it. Isn't that sacrilege?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



xiaorishu • 9 months ago

Spirituality is actually bullshit. My friend is spiritual but I trust her simply because she is my friend. But I think, total materialism (or how one creepy guy used to say, "that's Fanatic Materialism from Stellaris!", I want to cut his neck!) is exactly the total truth. We have to evolve and adapt to the natural world we live in, and get over it, not invent various tools such as that bullshit called spirituality.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



JD Katumba • 9 months ago

Being Ugandan, its amazing how Urban makes mention of it in this post, of all the countries out there! i wonder how Uganda got to his mind first

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



esperantokid → **JD Katumba** • 8 months ago

Probably because it's a country with a lot of people, that he's never been to, with a small internet presence and that starts with U. All of these things would push him to thinking about Uganda.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



The Very Disgusting Truth • 9 months ago

Just too much hate and misery in this world today to think about that shit.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Zglerg • a year ago

I'm coming back here out of nostalgia, realizing how much this is true these days...

Our time is the time when power has been given to the dumb. By power I mean being able to affect the whole world, to the point of causing existential threat. And by the dumb I'm not targeting anybody in particular, I just mean anyone, but mostly everyone, as we are a lot dumber collectively than as individuals.

Anyway, this happened because, at the moment humanity gained such power (which is sometime around the industrial revolution), nothing and no one was there to THINK, just think, about this new power, about the consequences of using it, and to give it a moral, philosophical and spiritual frame. The power was just released to the masses, and have been used in a totally anarchical, out-of-control way. Consumer society is the best example of this I can think of. Defining as our societal model the mechanism of frantically converting our planet's resources into garbage, is possibly the most stupid thing we've ever done as a species. The concept of ever-lasting economic growth is a solid candidate too. Not mentioning the obvious harm we're doing to everything, including our own species.

Would religion have done its job, by having progressed along with science instead of being a couple millennia behind, I'm sure it would have provided the wisdom to prevent us from destroying our planet mindlessly.

Back in the 15th century, French writer François Rabelais was already saying "Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul". It has never been truer than today...

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Fernando Benítez • 2 years ago

Not sure how Santa Claus, The Easter Bunny, and The Tooth Fairy, secular creations, are examples of the corruption of religion? But at least pope Benedict, head emeritus of one of the world's largest religions, agrees with you on the relationship of faith and science:

<http://www.catholicnewsagen...>

<http://www.huffingtonpost.c...>

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

Well...

I don't know if there is a God either, but after doing some research, I've decided that it's better off to be happy and hopeful than miserable and short sighted. I have no problem with atheists, but I have found that they are as rooted in their belief that there is no God as some theists are that there is a God. If people are questioning the existence of God, why not question the existence of love? Or happiness? Or math? The thing is, we have no way of knowing, and we could also just be a simulation in the giant mind of God. (Or an ASI)

Questions for atheists: Is there anything that would make you believe in a God? If so, what?

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



xiaorishu → Michael Soareverix • 9 months ago

I am an atheist. Nothing ever will make me believe in god. Not a thing. Because why? There is NO God! Face it, sucky theists! Get over it! Read science textbooks and you will get the fact that there is NO such thing as God! I don't lack belief in God, I don't just believe there is no God, I KNOW there is NO God!!! I KNOW THAT!!! I used to be Buddhist but I gave this bullshit thing up, and now I know that atheism - the real atheism, scientific atheism, antireligious atheism, strong, militant atheism, not "just lack of belief in God", is 100% verified, scientifically proven truth.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Michael Soareverix → xiaorishu • 9 months ago

Hmm, that's interesting. Perhaps someday I'll feel that way. But for now, I enjoy believing in God and I enjoy the conversations I have and the deep sense of well-being (even if I'm just talking to myself.) Do you have something similar? I'd be interested to know

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Frostproofed → Michael Soareverix • 6 months ago

That's an easy one. Appear in person and make it well known. It takes nothing more. I don't care if it was a ball of talking energy if it could back up the talk. Very simple stuff. I'm glad hope is getting you so far in your life, but it doesn't get things done for me nor the results I want. That's all myself.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Watcha Say → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

I don't understand how everyone can follow religion around blindly. I understand that they are grown up in a religious environment their whole life, but do they really never think of the discrepancies that come up? I wasn't raised in this kind of environment, but I haven't committed suicide or felt any less happy than anyone who does believe in religion. Perhaps it's because my optimism in life hasn't reached too low of a point yet, but before I am given any sort of proof, I can't help but suggest that the religious are incredibly ignorant.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



xiaorishu → Watcha Say • 9 months ago

Optimism is even bigger ignorance than religion. Because it doesn't even use real-world evidence to prove that things are going to be for the better. They just believe it's going to be better. But reality is, optimism might actually turn out to be a belief despite the evidence to the contrary. We, atheists, don't need beliefs. We need KNOWLEDGE. Optimists lack knowledge about the things that they believe in. Real atheists don't even associate hope as

about how things will be, they just believe it. Real atheists always are pessimists, because yes, you will die eventually, and the universe will eventually face the heat death. No "natural cycle" even exists.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Michael Soareverix → Watcha Say • 2 years ago

Believe me, stuff comes up that really shakes your faith, and it happens all the time. I do agree that there are a few (and there will always be a few) people who avoid anything that contradicts their point of view. Unfortunately, this erodes their faith and their subconscious is forced to deal with it indirectly and isn't able to provide an answer, leaving these people worried, angry, and shortsighted. The religious can be the deepest thinkers, and they can also be the shallowest thinkers. I agree that you are probably equally happy but there is religion in everything. It's ingrained in humans, and there's no way to ignore it. Take iconoclasts, for example. By adding the profane to the sacred, they accept that the item was sacred. Anyways, I don't think there is anyway we can 100% escape our religious instincts so I would find peace in accepting and improving it. Good to know that you're interested enough to comment!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

ChristianRVA → Watcha Say • 2 years ago

It's best not to follow blindly. I certainly didn't grow up in a religious environment my whole life. Just enough of a taste that made me want to know if God was real. Over the course of my life, I had many questions. I was doubtful but curious. Of course I was aware of this huge "church" thing that was based on the idea that many people were killed for claiming that they had seen a man claiming to be the Son of God. not only that, but they said they saw him alive again after he had been thoroughly killed by professionals. They said it meant that God isn't going to punish us, because his own son took the rap for everything. His return from the dead meant we too could live again. The Bible tells a much different story than most people think. The reason our calendar is set up this way, even when we say "goodbye" we're actually saying "God be with ye," because about 2000 years ago, God died. He was killed by his own followers, the Hebrews, because they didn't believe it was really him. That isn't the religion most people talk about. It's not very flattering. And it doesn't make life easier. But it's worth a look.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Sam → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

Love and happiness are chemical reactions the brain. There is clear evidence for this. Math is a series of discoveries of patterns in our universe. That's the best way I can describe it. That last part went ridiculously far out on a limb. God is a hypothesis. Also evidence that a god exists would be the only thing that would make me believe in god. It wouldn't be belief then either, I don't want to believe and I shouldn't have to. We should be able to know.

11 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Mark Monnin → Sam • 2 years ago

I can't speak for God, but here's how I see it, in case that helps:

God created us to love him. To believe in him. To bring him glory. But he doesn't want us to be forced to do that. He wants us to want to do it. Just like how human relationships are so much better if they're genuine, rather than forced. So we have to have the option to not love him. And we have to have the option to not believe in him. If we were sure of his existence, there would be some forced pressure to follow and obey.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Jack B. Nimble → Mark Monnin • a month ago

Wow.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Michael Soareverix → Sam • 2 years ago

I see... but is there anything specific that would make you believe in a divine force? I messed up, by questioning math. I meant logic. There's nothing material in logic, so I suppose that this disproves materialism. There's nothing to suggest that we aren't in a simulation, but I find hope in the fact that if we are, then we are just as important as if we weren't. Our morals seem to reach farther than a simulation.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Bianca Elaine Silva → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

Michael, please keep in mind English is not my first language.

I am an atheist myself and have been since I was 14. God differs from love or logic to me because those are our reactions or our way of thinking. They are a natural part of who we are.

God was a concept brought along by religion. It was presented by men alongside a set of rules that people still follow to this day with no proof whatsoever.

I would not blindly believe in God, since I believe it was constructed by men in order to fulfill the need for a higher purpose.

In addition, I do not need religion to be positive, in fact I think it is the other way around for me.

Only a proof of God would make me acknowledge it, to answer your question.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Michael Soareverix → Bianca Elaine Silva • 2 years ago

Sorry it took me so long to respond; your comment is fascinating to read. However, I was asking about something specific that would make you believe in God, like seeing someone get magical powers or come back to their family, or just seeing/talking to God. I myself believe in God because I have felt God's presence, and I see God's work everywhere, from the Golden Ratio to people changing and becoming better people than they once were.

I'm not sure what would make you want to have a negative religion, but I do know that the most strident atheist friends I have were once believers whose belief was "disproved" by science and they feel like they were treated badly under religion and have wasted time. I myself think that science and religion go nicely together, actually, and I simply add scientific discoveries to my belief about how God made the universe.

Final thing: if you want to understand why so many people have a deep faith life, read *The Shack*, by William Paul Young. Such a beautiful book. Just look at the reviews if you don't believe me. I know everyone hates deep theological books (I do, they're too dense) but this is a story, not an explanation. Amazing book. If you read one book this year, I would recommend *The Shack*. It's about a man whose daughter has been murdered by a psychopath for no other reason than killing. The man gets a handwritten note in the mail from (apparently) God, telling him to come to the Shack where his daughter was killed. I hope the book changes your mind, because it's a story too beautiful for me to summarize.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Bianca Elaine Silva → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

No problem, sometimes I'm so busy it takes me months to take the time to read wbw posts.

Someone allegedly saying they saw or talked to God would not convince me, neither see or talk would. It would shake my "non-Faith" very much but I would still consider a very likely possibility of some sort of illusion.

Don't get me wrong, I am not one of those people that mock religion and beliefs. For a few years in my life, I actually wanted to believe.

I was living several miles away from home as a 18 years old in a very religious town. I met an awesome church community that took me to a spiritual retreat where I really wanted to believe and be a part of that, but I still remained cynical.

A couple of years ago, when a good friend of mine passed away, I wanted so badly to believe in God and in some place like heaven where he would still exist and be just fine, but I still believe God is a human invention, sorry.

I think only some sort of big Old Testament miracle would make me believe. Like bringing somebody from the dead in a way Science couldn't explain.

I've heard a couple of recommendations for *The Shack*, it is extremely popular in Brazil, but I passed it because I knew it discussed god; I will give it a go though, since you are an extremely polite person, and the first religious conversation I've ever gotten without turning into a huge argument.

Thank you very much!

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Michael Soareverix → Bianca Elaine Silva • 2 years ago

Thanks! I'm really happy that you're reading *The Shack*; it's really helped me figure stuff out in my own life. I know a lot of people who want to believe but haven't really tried it out, and that's fine, but I think if you want to believe, then you shouldn't purposefully leave yourself a back door. At the same time, I also wouldn't blindly follow everything, and try to develop your own spirituality inside your religion. For me, I really enjoy meditation and reading books like *The Shack*, so sometimes before I try to connect with things outside my realm of influence, I look at pictures of nature or do a bit of meditation.

I actually agree with you about humans creating God. I don't think that God is a complete human invention, but I do believe that we've put God in a box, thinking that he is exactly like us and gets angry and hateful the same way we do. One thing that really jarred me out of my previous mindset was when I was reading a Bible for fun and I found God describing himself as "I am who I am" rather than saying something definite that we think he is. Thanks for taking my advice; I'm not sure anyone has actually taken it on matters like this, and I hope you enjoy *The Shack*!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Michael Soareverix → Bianca Elaine Silva • 2 years ago

Thanks! I really hope you enjoy the book, it really helped me out in a hard time. I'm happy you've considered the possibility of God, because taking a look around is the first step to grasping a few concepts. Reading your earlier post, I noticed that you've

been an Atheist since you were 14... did something happen to change your belief? It's all right if you don't answer or give specifics, because I know a few things that I wouldn't really want to discuss with anyone... except God. That's why I like The Shack so much. I'm really happy that you're reading it, and even if you don't change your mind, it gives you a nice warm feeling. Thank you for being so polite! I am very impressed with your level of acceptance and deep thinking!

Oh last thing, since I noticed something in your above post: I think you are somewhat correct about saying that God is a human invention. God (the full) is not a created being, but I do believe that humans in general confine God to a box. They put their own attributes into God, and the thing that made me realize this was when God stated his name in the Old Testament: I am who I am. That encompasses just about everything, while humans try to say that God punishes people, just as they punish people, and that God lives apart, just as they live apart. Hope this gives you some thoughts of your own; I'll be happy to read them! Thanks for taking the time to read my thoughts!

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Michael → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

Evidence.

12 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Michael Soareverix → Michael • 2 years ago

There are several books, if you take the time to read them, explaining why there might be a God. Can we know for certain? No. Can you know for certain that there isn't a God? No. But, if you want to talk about statistic chances, I would consider it "Extremely Probable" that there is a God. Please, the more research you do, the better you will understand the question. Faith is only faith because it is questioned. The stronger you question it, the stronger it becomes, like the keystone in an arch. I have found this to be true in my own life, and I figure that this is because without questioning your faith directly, you are questioning it indirectly, which leaves you unable to answer the questions you pose to yourself.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

xiaorishu → Michael Soareverix • 9 months ago

I KNOW there is no God, because I don't see anything that might be associated with him. There's only a natural, real universe. Universe full of suffering, pain, deaths, natural disasters etc. The only known habitable planet is Earth, every other exoplanet discovered recently doesn't even seem to be habitable, since we have no warp drives, and no spaceprobe ever has reached relativistic velocities, to prove that those planets actually are habitable. Jeez, I don't even think that warp drives are possible from the scientific perspective, sci-fi is just as bullshit as fairytales are. That's why I think there is no such thing as "habitable" exoplanet, and will never be. Our sun will explode and be a red giant, and Earth will die. Even on Mars, I think, only the colonist who are militant atheists and lack any beliefs even in something that is natural (Morals? Don't get me wrong, we invented them, and we should therefore question them too!), genetically healthy (no inherited diseases), and physically strong will survive. I hate even the word "believe". On the time our solar system will have a network of planetary colonies, all the religions and even something that might remind of it, and even any moral that involves charity, forgiveness and empathy will vanish. That will be a big evolution of us.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Nicholas Erwin → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

Please don't pretend evidence is on your side. If you believe based on a personal experience, I have no way to test that, but it's not okay to make up or misrepresent facts to support your beliefs.

The science, in fact, clearly goes the other way. Evolution explains the origin of life and the origin of God, there are rational explanations for nearly every "miraculous" event, and the Bible is not a credible source because of its numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. If God does exist, he exists in a way indistinguishable from nonexistence.

I would be interested to hear your response. I went to Christian schools until college, so I have been presented with practically every proof for God in the book—and I still realized there wasn't one in my senior year of HS. I guarantee you that scientific evidence doesn't cut it.

9 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

conurse → Nicholas Erwin • 2 years ago

I think arguments for and against "God" are something from the Fog..... Does anyone really care how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? I know I don't bother with such silliness. Just to read others doing this dance of belief/not belief is enough to make me want to go fishing.....

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Michael Soareverix → Nicholas Erwin • 2 years ago

I'm not saying that "I know" there is a God. However, I do believe there is a God, and not purely based on probability chances, but because believing makes me a better person and makes me feel a lot happier.
I could cite evidence like the golden ratio and the fact that nothing quite accounts for something coming from nothing, but that isn't proof, so instead I'd have to cite personal feelings and experiences, which do very little for people who don't believe in God. (I might be wrong in thinking this, but generally I've noticed that my atheist friends have had their own experiences that convince them that God isn't real).

I definitely believe in evolution, though I do believe God started the ball rolling towards intelligent life. I also don't believe that God hides himself away from us. Rather, I'd guess that our job would be to wonder whether we want to be with God and work towards it.

Just my thoughts on the matter, probably pretty flawed, but I hope you're interested in my response. Thanks for commenting! I would be interested to hear your own response!

^ | v • Reply • Share >



David → Michael Soareverix • 9 months ago

Hi...it's nice to read a discussion between two people with opposing views without it descending into a contest of insults. Personally I have always believed that faith in itself proves the existence of god. It does not require religion to have faith. It is a very personal experience. You have a personal relationship with God. Who am I, as someone who does not experience him in this way, to deny his existence for someone else.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



xiaorishu → David • 9 months ago

Insulting religious people should be acceptable and insulting atheists shouldn't. Period.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Ivan Korotkov → Michael Soareverix • 2 years ago

It's very easy to talk about "why there might be a god" (imo "a God" spelling is an oxymoron). Does any of these books talk about "why there most likely is a god"? Can you list any of them?

Such arguments usually presuppose something else (equally questionable), like Kantian objectivity of morality, etc.

If we're in a simulation, that means there *is* a god – the ones who coded that simulation. Basically, any evidence that the laws of universe are somehow anthropocentric – or at least recognise human beings in some special way – like consciousness causing wavefunction collapse, etc – is a good evidence that there is a god, most likely in form of this universe being a simulation.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Michael Soareverix → Ivan Korotkov • 2 years ago

Here's a list of the books that I've read on the matter, why there is *most likely* a God: The Mind of God, The Shack (unscientific but an excellent book full of explanations and answers) and a few others that I read but don't remember the title. I'll see if I can find them and put the titles here.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



ChristianRVA → Michael • 2 years ago

There's a whole world of study called apologetics that presents all kinds of evidence. But even if God himself came down here to meet us, we'd probably kill him. (again)

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Daniel • 3 years ago

OH my God, you're not from Uganda. The perks of living in a small country! Every time you get mentioned, it's like Christmas came early! Yay!!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Rimšiakas • 3 years ago

I'll just say one word: Pantheism.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Chinese Gum Jerry • 3 years ago

Hi everybody. I'm not from Uganda!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

JohnAdams_1796 • 3 years ago

Here's a framework that I think we can agree on: science can and does progressively fill in the gaps, and thus knowledge replaces wishful thinking.

For instance, on the question of where we go when we die.

It is easy to jump up and down and demand that everyone accept your view and your view only. But that's not good science. In time, some clever experiment will validate or invalidate your pet belief.

That said, it won't be enough to convince many to let go of their old, invalidated beliefs.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Will Sam • 3 years ago

I found someone who tries to get the point accross about evolution as simply (and bluntly as possible) proofofevolutionisfalse.com

11 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

Frostproofed → Will Sam • 6 months ago

And it's gone. That's all, folks.

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Sam → Will Sam • 2 years ago

Bookmarking that site, thanks

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Scott Skinger → Will Sam • 2 years ago

"Amen!" :)

^ | v • Reply • Share >

Anonymous • 3 years ago

This is a response to Thomas Anderson's post. I don't have Facebook so I can't reply directly.

Your comment is very intellectual and matter-of-fact according to your terms. But most people do not view spirituality in the same context as you, nor would they agree with your terms.

Most people experience spirituality as a deeply intuitive sense that there is a non-conceptual substance/force/essence at the root of their being, and the nature of that substance is essentially joyful, blissful, and good. It is intuitively perceived to be their true, incorruptible nature; and the universe and everything in it is merely an expression of that true essential nature.

Most people do not associate spirituality with supernatural laws, explanations, nymphs, and so on, but rather with the non-conceptual essence of their being.

Although your definition of spirituality may work for you, it is not a very useful definition when it comes to tackling the matter that the term spirituality points to—for most people. You are limiting the subject of spirituality to your conceptual framework; while the essence of the term points to intuitive nonconceptual experience. The subject of spirituality is not philosophy, though we do need to use words if we want to talk about it. Though I'm sure your philosophy professor would give you top marks.

And lastly, epistemology is the study of knowledge, not a subset of a subset of philosophy. You could say it is a branch of philosophy. So check-minus from the prof for that one.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

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1 comment • a year ago

Sensorfire — I'd been to the first turtle page before, but this is my first time finding this.

**Lars Stroeback**

I think when the article (and Carl Sagan) is talking about how science is a source of spirituality, and how spirituality makes us understand science, what they really mean is "philosophy".

Like, "How do we find aliens?" is a question of science. "How should we react if we do find aliens?" is a philosophical question. Not a spiritual one.

"Can I be reincarnated on Mars as an alien?" is a spiritual question.

That's how I understand these English words anyway. Philosophy means thinking about what the meaning of life and the world is. Spirituality means your attitude towards the supernatural. Whereas religion is the organised social implementation of spirituality.

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**Ian Brett Cooper**

"...one day I asked my dad about God. "Some people believe in God and others don't, and everyone has to make that decision for themselves."

You're lucky. My parents and my school (you know, that place where you're supposed to learn stuff so you can function in the real world) said that God was real. Totally messed me up for decades.

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**Rizky Farizan F**

The analogy of religion's punishment same with a country's laws which if you are violate the law, then you should get jail. There is no negative perspective about religion punishment as long as it is very objectively or rationaly law then human surely may join the religion as their faith.

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