

THE GOD OF DEATH

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark, and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales so is the other.

—Francis Bacon

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Of the tons of apologetic literature in defense of the existence of God as a creator, there is hardly a word in defense of God as a destroyer. The literature assumes God has power over life, death and the afterlife. Therefore we should spend the rest of our lives begging for mercy.

This article argues that death comes from natural causes. The idea of resurrection and afterlife has prehistoric origins born out of ignorance and superstition. So does the idea of God.

For those who find comfort in believing in life after death, I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that nobody is going to live forever no matter what they think or do. We cannot escape from reality because there is no place else to go. We are mortal creatures. Once our body dies, all life and cognizance dies with it.

It is a fact confirmed by medical science every day that there no such thing as a spirit that keeps us alive. We are born with a will to live, but once our body says our time is up, the best we can do is postpone the inevitable if circumstances allow it.

The good news is that there is no reason to fear the state of death because it brings about a total absence of feeling and consciousness. We have much more to gain by worshipping life and by doing whatever is in our power to enhance it.

I've heard the argument that the popularity of religion may suggest that humans have a religious gene. An anthropologist would argue that humans have a primal fear of unknown things over which they have no control. We can see evidence of that in the daily news and from personal experiences. Religion evolved out of a need to alleviate those fears, but it is based on obsolete knowledge.

Let's go back in time to when men didn't understand natural causation. Generally we think in terms of patterns. We learn by associating new patterns with patterns of which we are familiar. Try to imagine how they might have thought.

That man was as an acting being was self evident. Materials, they saw, have no life and can't move on their own. Therefore, they reasoned, the movement of heavenly bodies was caused by unseen beings. They called these beings gods or God.

Humans breathe and air can be felt but not seen. Therefore, by association, wind comes from invisible beings. Their breathing was evidence of the spirit within them. The etymology of spirit comes from "air."

Living bodies are warm so they concluded that the sun was the sun (son) of god that sustained life. Not realizing that their bodies generated their own heat, they thought that it came from the sun. As the sun went through the seasons it increased and ebbed in strength in parallel with the vegetation cycle. So they decided that the sun brings life as it rises and death as it falls.

The idea of resurrection continues with similar primitive logic. Ancients saw patterns of resurrection in the seasonal life and death of plants. During the year they saw the plant cycle coincide with the sun cycle so they assumed that the sun followed the same cycle. Even the idea of heaven and hell implies that all humans are resurrected.

They associated evil with their primal fear of darkness. Darkness brings coldness which they associated with the coldness of dead bodies. So it followed that there were deadly spirits lurking in the darkness.

Life was a constant struggle so they imagined that the cycle between light and darkness represented a struggle between the powers of light with the powers of darkness. Heaven was associated with light and hell with darkness. Where one went depended on which power wielded the most influence.

Every concept in modern religion stems from the fundamentals described above. Religious thinking has nothing to offer but mental escape from reality to a time of ignorance. The social benefits achieved through scientific discovery offer an object lesson on how to enhance life through understanding nature.

DUALISM

The definition of spirit has taken on a new meaning in modern times. When Christians concern themselves with saving their souls, they don't quite know what it is, but they think it is something that lasts forever.

The idea of a soul or spirit comes from the belief that consciousness and body are two different substances conjoined by divine will: Consciousness has no material substance; it sees, it feels, it thinks in some kind of invisible realm. The body processes all the other functions. This belief is called dualism, which holds that consciousness is an entity in its own right. Other ways of stating dualism: it is a person within a person or a ghost in a machine.

It might help to think of our body as a biological machine. The brain takes in all incoming data and creates for us, in effect, a virtual reality. Thus our conscious experiences depend on the nature of our neural processes and not on the nature of the events in the world that activate those processes.

The human brain is the most intricate and complex entity on our planet and maybe in the universe. As perplexing as it may be, there is absolutely nothing that we can see, think, feel or know that does not depend on the workings of the tangled web of nerve cells within each person. We believe that we live in a world full of sounds, colors, smells and tastes because that is what our every day experience every day of our lives. It is this common-sense view of reality that confuses our understanding of consciousness.

Although the external environment is teeming with electromagnetic radiation and air pressure waves, without consciousness it is totally black and utterly silent. Objects emit colorless radiation which our brain translates into colors. To gage depth, our two eyes create a stereo image from the colors. Objects touch us with force which our brain translates into feelings. Similarly, it translates air pressure into sound. Sound has direction because our brain can measure the time difference between each ear. Food doesn't have taste in of itself, taste sensation comes from way the brain translates the molecules. Gas doesn't have smell except to our brain. This is why consciousness seems intangible.

It's the metaphors that confuse the issue. "Mind" is one of those metaphors. Conscious and subconscious mind imply two ethereal minds. Some metaphors parse human values as if they were competing entities. We do not have a good conscience and a bad conscience; it's one subjective conscience. The idea of free will also implies something beyond consciousness that frees people from moral values.

Again, all thoughts, memories and values come from one source, the body. Behavior and personal values are guided by one's reaction to sensory inputs. They are not interjected by supernatural entities-which is another abstraction. I hate to be repetitious, but this is fallacy so ingrained in Christians today.

This belief in dualism carries into the concept of God as a conscious being. The Bible calls it his Spirit which has been modernized to "Intelligent Designer." This is especially far fetched: a being with an invisible mind contained in an invisible body. The pagan religions share this same goal of trying to gain favor from nature by personifying it. The fallacy of dualism is fatal to Christianity's singular purpose of saving souls.

I've heard Christians talk as if their destiny was being guided by God. It's as if they think of themselves as one of God's marionettes playing their part in one grand scheme. It is from this fallacy of dualism that they think that this way of thinking unites their spirit with God's Spirit. It is just plain impossible. Loosely speaking, the only thing that unites two non-existent entities is their non-existence.

POLITICS

Christians should give some serious thought to the political goals of organized religion. The only power the Church has is what people willingly concede to it. To accept God on faith, one first has to first accept Church teachings on faith. By definition, faith implies ignorance. I could not think of a more senseless way to go through life then to spend it on ideas steeped in ignorance. We should focus our attention on life; death has nothing to offer.

Further reading

[Why We Feel: The Science of Human Emotions](#) by Victor S. Johnston