

I Do Not Believe in an Afterlife

I will start by telling you what I DON'T believe. I do NOT believe in an afterlife. I do not believe that existence on Earth is a dress rehearsal for the REAL thing: an after-life that people *imagined* when the world was flat and the sun *revolved around US*. Instead, I look past traditional concepts of afterlives, at **an unimaginable myriad of possibilities**. To me, **uncertainty** is **more** comforting than the **expectation** of a **defined** future realm of existence.

Popular concepts of after-lives seem to be machismo **repeats** of what we've already **gone** through in this Man's world. The **Universe** is too **vast** for me to want to be a **re-run**.

Therefore, I believe it is essential to simply appreciate being alive.

But, IF there is no Eternity to reward me for my mortality, what IS my brutish and short life all about? **WHY** am I here? I do not know. Don't I WANT to know? Heck, yeah. More than **anything** else. I have studied dozens of belief systems and philosophies and concepts and narcissists, trying to look through the eyes of people who have *glimpsed flashes* of ... the All That IS.

I enjoy the beauty and *transcendence* of most spiritual traditions. Most belief systems advocate various **universal Truths**. It's *impossible* for me to choose from them. **That's OK**. They help us see **beyond ourselves**. And, they represent *only* a fraction of the **unimaginable myriad of possibilities** of what **Existence** is all about.

Unfortunately, I also believe that many religious **institutional** leaders seem to have more interest in **worldly** power, than in spiritual **connectivity**. Every religion I've seen has told

its followers to **kill** other people, in the name of their **god**. Why would I want to share an **afterlife** permeated by murderous energies?

I believe I have to face the Great Unknown without dogma or ritual structure. My not liking this SET-UP does NOT make it go away.

But what about **causality**? Cause and effect! I believe there's a big disconnect in the concept of a Supreme Being who has the imagination to create **planets and quasars and probiotics**, but who **cannot** be bothered to keep people from **killing** each other. The **cause and effect arguments of religions** are too **cheeky** for me. Why stick up for the concept of an inconsistent Almighty who likes to make **messes** out of people's lives?

I **do** like knowing the cause of things that happen in my **daily** life. But, I will NEVER fathom the depths of the **Universe**. **No one can**. I believe that's wonderful! To their credit, religions and science all strive to understand the answer to "**WHY**"? But there is always the danger that the proponents of a discipline might decide that **they** have figured out enough, and that **no one else** should learn anything more. **There is NO reason to stop asking BIG questions**.

Think of the science fiction stories that refer to the **human quest for knowledge** as the **Universe** looking at itself. I like that. It makes me feel... **universal**.

Since Life is not fair, I believe it is crucial to do *something* about the existence of **Suffering**. I believe that almost every human being has an instinctive sense of **Right and Wrong**. This sense IS easily colored by personal experiences, family traits, customs, etc. Sometimes **personal circumstances** can give **unearned advantages** to one person or

group, and impose **disadvantages** on others. Despite our personal experiences and burdens, the sense of **Right and Wrong** calls us to **do the right thing**.

Stay with me... Doing the right thing includes **everyone** taking responsibility for their **own** actions. Since we all make **mistakes**, we are all capable of feeling **empathy** for the plight of others who are **Suffering** from the effects of **their own mistakes**. Or from the **disadvantages** of their life's circumstances. Since most religions, mythologies and schools of thought address **Suffering**, I **believe** we have globally-available **Tools of Compassion** that EACH of us can use to help relieve **Suffering**.

I'll wrap this up with some R E S P E C T. I believe that Life would be globally more pleasant if EVERYONE showed more **respect** for everyone else, regardless of anyone's beliefs. I believe that people are capable of **really** listening, asking for clarification when there is confusion, and asking for clarification **again** when an argument is about to explode. I believe that people can smooth over bad feelings, **when one person says, "I'm sorry"** and another person replies, **"No worries"**. And they **really mean it**.

To summarize, I believe we **all** can perform **Acts of Compassion**. We **all** can learn how to ask for **forgiveness** and learn **how** to **Forgive**. EVERYONE on the planet could have a GOOD LIFE – if we **ALL really appreciate being alive and realize that we're all in this together**. And here's a bonus: when one **does good**, it feels **GOOD**.

And what if I DO find myself in an Afterlife?

That's OK, too. It IS one of **the unimaginable myriad of possibilities**.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.