

secularworld

A Positive Voice for Atheism

Fourth Quarter: 2016

Due to the Freedom of Information Act of AAI, the Secular World Magazine is now an online magazine free for all. And yes, you can still subscribe to receive the hardcopy.

www.secularworldmagazine.com



 **ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL**
FOR A SECULAR WORLD

IN THIS ISSUE:

Witchcraft-style exorcism is still happening in black communities

Social media, PC culture & atheism

Dinkoism: India's parody religion mocks traditional norms

Was philosopher David Hume an atheist or an agnostic?

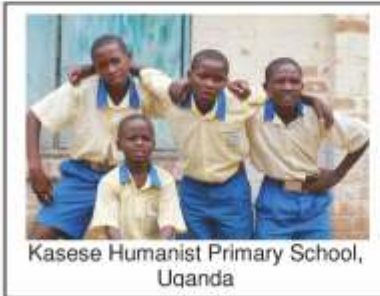
EXCLUSIVE: Interviews with Christopher Dicarlo & Anthony Grayling & more!

If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making A Difference?

It's not enough to simply espouse a naturalist view based on science and reason. The **AAI Foundation**, an internal program of Atheist Alliance International, supports educational and community improvement projects - including through international exchanges - and advocates on behalf of atheists facing discrimination around the world, particularly in developing countries.

The AAI Foundation sponsors and supports a number of activities around the world:

Humanist Schools in Africa and Asia.



Kasese Humanist Primary School,
Uganda



Escuela Moderna Kerewan
Kindergarten, The Gambia



Cambodian Children's Trust
(Cambodia)

AAI has been an active sponsor of humanist and secular schools in countries where religious organizations control the majority of educational institutions. AAI and its partners provide a secular alternative to focus on critical thinking, science and reason in a naturalistic and nontheistic worldview. **Since 2009, these schools have served over 1,200 children.**

Legal assistance and family support for atheist discrimination and oppression.



Alexander Aan is an Indonesian man who was attacked by his neighbors, fired from his government job, and then arrested by the Indonesian police and convicted with a 3-year prison sentence for 'inciting religious hatred' after posting 'God does not exist' on his personal Facebook page. AAI covered Alexander's legal costs and provided family support while working with local human-rights groups to campaign for his release, for a change in Indonesian law and to fundraise to assist with his family's ongoing expenses while Alexander, the family breadwinner, languished in prison.

Relief assistance to countries and regions devastated by natural or man-made disasters.



2010 Haitian Earthquake

Since 2010, AAI has organized relief efforts with our affiliate groups and raised thousands of dollars for natural disasters that have befallen communities around the world. Per Robert Ingersoll: "Hands that help are better than hands that pray."



2013 Typhoon Haiyan

Overseas social work project sponsorships

Scholarships for the next generation of humanist leaders in indigent countries



The AAI Foundation exists to improve the quality of life for communities through the application of critical thinking, science and reason. It is through your support that this important work continues.

www.AtheistAlliance.org/Activities/AAI-Foundation

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A Positive Voice For Global Atheism

Fourth Quarter : 2016

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ATHEIST
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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Onur Romano

Dear readers, this issue is a special one because it is a first in the history of our magazine. Previous issues used to address the respective individual and affiliate/associate members of our alliance since our quarterly magazine used to be a subscription magazine which was distributed only to our members and/or subscribers. As one of the most respected ancient philosophical thinkers Heraclitus puts it, the only thing that is constant is change itself. So, we have made some changes, and will be doing a lot more. Due to the freedom of information act of the Atheist Alliance International, **the Secular World Magazine is now a free-subscription magazine.**


So, everybody can access all of the previous and current issues of the SWM. On 27th of November 2016 Sunday, Atheist Alliance International held its 2016 Annual General Assembly. I'd like to thank all members of the alliance who honoured me by showing their support by electing me as the president of the alliance for another term. It is a great honour to serve to the Board of the Atheist Alliance International. Thanks to the remarkable talents and dedicated efforts of our volunteers and directors, we are moving through 2017 with powerful momentum and compelling evidence that AAI's best is yet to come. I am very excited by the opportunities we have to work together to make our alliance even better. Many of them are

possible because of the time and thought that thousands of AAI community members have invested in recent efforts to bring our brightest future into sharp focus — initiatives such as the Atheist Census, the Annual AAI Foundation Scholarships, the Asylum Project, the Critical Thinking Project, UN Network, Funding Humanist Schools, and new policies like funding events in all continents, which will give voice to constituents across the alliance and beyond. Another milestone is that as promised, we are almost through with our triple transition period in Leadership, Board and Structure.

I am proud to announce that a new set of director roles and responsibilities are adopted by the AAI, which explored ways to maximize our roles, resources and reach out as a premier international atheist organization, and the strategic visioning and communication initiative, which is articulating different values and priorities but a shared vision, to guide us for the remainder of this journey. I write to ask you to share your stories, thoughts, experiences, ideas, and of course expectations with us as we launch and open the Secular World Magazine to the public eye. This step can provide an accurate "big picture" only with widespread participation. To ensure objectivity and thoroughness, atheist activists at Atheist Alliance International are helping lead the global atheist community together with a steering recognition comprised of



affiliate/associate members, individual members, volunteers, directors, supporters and followers.

Our goal will be to identify successful initiatives; uncover new and existing challenges facing members of our community; and develop strategic global initiatives to build on our collective successes and address challenges. Thank you in advance for your participation in volunteering for the alliance — it truly matters! We look forward to sharing the results — and a related action plan for the near future — with you. 



International Conference on Freedom of Conscience and Expression in the 21st Century

22-23 July 2017, Central London

Join notable free-thinkers for an historic International Conference on Freedom of Conscience and Expression in the 21st century on 22-23 July 2017 in Central London.

Speakers include Mukto-Muna's **Bonya Ahmed**, Filmmaker **Deeyah Khan**, Playwright **Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti**, FEMEN Leader **Inna Shevchenko**, Physicist **Lawrence M Krauss**, Algerian Sociologist **Marieme Helie Lucas**, Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain Spokesperson **Maryam Namazie**, Scientist **Richard Dawkins**, Author of Blasphémateur **Waleed Al Hussein**, Moroccan-born Charlie Hebdo Columnist **Zineb El Rhazoui** and many more.

For more information: www.secularconference.com.

Become a Supporting Member of Atheist Alliance International

Supporting AAI means promoting naturalism, science and reason while challenging and confronting religious privilege and discrimination against atheists and religious minorities around the world.

AAI's projects include **funding new groups** and **conferences**, **school** and **social service projects**, bringing attention to **religious discrimination**, as well as **legal** and **asylum support** for those targeted by religious bigots.

AAI operates entirely through the support of our members. Even more, if you live in the US, your donation to AAI is fully tax-deductible.

AAI members are also invited to directly participate in projects supported by AAI around the world, whether it be teaching or assisting a primary school class, participating in a speaking tour on atheism & humanism, or working with one of our affiliate groups to improve the local quality of life.

Your monthly contribution helps AAI sustain and expand our programs. Join our team and know that you are making a difference in challenging religion and expanding freethought around the world!

All members receive members-only access to the AAI website | Freethought Audio Library e-version of *Secular World* magazine(printed copy at additional charge) | *Imagine!* quarterly newsletter

Monthly memberships include a printed copy of *Secular World* magazine

Thanks for your support! Together, we'll create a sane and rational world!



FOR A SECULAR WORLD



atheistalliance.org

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

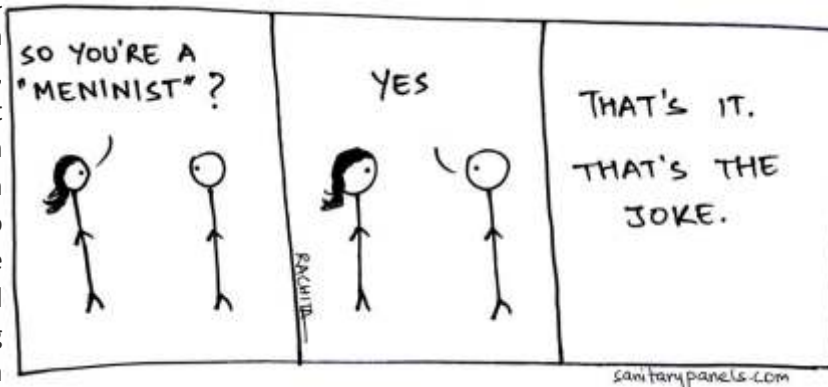
Rustam Singh

Welcome to the 4Q edition of the opposition to any form of bigotry or Secular World magazine. Apart from a hatred, xenophobes have shifted their new design, we're also going public and approaches to some interesting seeing how to shift funding solely to methods. Earlier, the classic way to advertisements and donations rather suppress an individual / movement's than limiting our audience to paid opinion involved a gender neutral form subscribers. While this doesn't justify of mansplaining, complete denial or the delay in the release of this magazine, discrediting the speaking by attacking I hope you like the change and we're irrelevant personal details of the always open to feedback to make sure protagonist. Now, hate groups and content remains as relevant to the individuals launch a counter movement atheist community as possible.

Speaking of an atheist community, how can we possibly be defined as a community when our only common denominator is the fact that we do not believe in something? Is it even justifiable to call ourselves a community or a collective? Questions like these, along with classic statements such as "atheism is also a religion" remind us every day that for rationalists like us, the battle against irrationality, bigotry and anti-scientific temper is just beginning. In troubling times ahead as the leader of one of the most powerful nations is an obvious sexist, racist, misogynist internet troll elected to be in power, it calls for an urgent time for us to move past divisive labels and intermingling categories to aim for a common cause.

Of lately, I've observed instead of traditional ways to diminish dissent or

that may have laughable objectives and even sound like an oxymoron. Take for example, the #AllLivesMatter slogan. To an educated mind, it is quite clear #BlackLivesMatter actually means black lives *also* matter. It is clearly implied the movement symbolises that black lives should also be treated with the rights, dignity, safety and all other privileges everyone else deserves. The movement obviously does not in any way state that black lives matter more than others, or that other lives do not matter, even if there are numerous individuals stating (or acting) otherwise.



Similarly, men's rights organizations, or movements like #NotAllMen in a counter to #YesAllWomen aim to deviate the debate and our energies and



focus to the semantics and grammar of our movements rather than the essential point of them. The purpose of languages is to communicate and send our message across, not to bicker about

its technicalities. Whether it's just shorter and catchier to abridge a movement's slogan to sound more convenient or just an error of judgement on its launch is arguable, but its foundational reason for existence should not be. Another example of the infamous internet troll that states variables of "I am a black transsexual lesbian and you can't prove otherwise or you're suppressing me". What originated from the

bathroom debate whether transsexuals should be allowed to use the washroom of their birth sex or the gender of their choice, or a third gender washroom spiralled out of control on the internet on genders and sexuality. Even something as horrendous as sexual assault has been parodied by victim blaming and trolling movements by individuals saying absurd things as “all sex is rape according to these feminists”. Genuinely good sections of society such as liberals are called libtards and feminists are called feminazis.

What do all these downright offensive trolls have in common? The concept of deviation from the original debate. Instead of using logic, science, facts and looking up peer reviewed statistics, bigots use (dark) humour to deviate from the original topic. If we feed the troll and try to correct them, or even devote too much attention in their direction, we're wasting valuable time, energy and resources in only getting our hands dirty. The surest way to counter them can be to keeping our head high and maintaining our position strongly as always. In a world of free speech where we advocate theists saying that they're offended is a void in an argument, we unfortunately have to take a few shots with a side of salt. However, where do we draw the line between accepting hate speech as a logical remainder of free speech, if there is such a line?

Things like “that's my opinion” apply to your choice of beverages such as coffee or a cold beer, definitely not on issues that affect basic human rights. Policies, nations, individuals and movements that deny human rights to anyone have every right to be called hate speech, and as civil members of society, we should definitely not shut up merely because they're a perspective from another person. The recent disastrous US elections have demonstrated for the

world to juggle through emotions of laughter, ridicule and then instantly panic at what happens when we allow insufferable hate speech to be passed on, especially by people in power. It would be impossible to state all the red alert signs where Trump should have been stopped or grossly rejected by any civil society member in the finite space of this column because there were so

grotesque opinion that undermines the rights of others. Allowing such hate speech to pass off as 'locker room talk' not only humiliates all women but also men, and desensitizes us to the prick of bigotry. No, it's not 'boys will be boys', and neither is it 'locker room talk' and it definitely isn't 'just a joke' when you deny an entire population of their human rights.

When a viral infection invades our body wiping out its defences and attacking its cells, those that stay and fight back have a higher chance of developing immunity against the virus or learning how to take it down. Escaping, denying, closing our eyes or waiting for it to automatically change does not cut the job. Understandably, we have been pushed back at least a few decades in progress with the change in the US elections, even if you aren't an American citizen. We must strive to stand our ground, advocate more strongly than before for inclusion, equality, secular rights and promote atheism as a scientific lifestyle that offers the most viable solution.

As I write this from India, there is a constant threat of saffronization lurking just around the corner at all given points of time. In a country where blasphemy is not defined clearly but punishable up to 3 years with a fine and then publishing content and images considered as blasphemous is a risk, but the struggle is monstrously larger for several other communities, nations and segments of people. I am a citizen of a free world that's terribly in danger of being visibly ruined beyond possible repair within my lifetime because of human action via climate change and yet conservatives disguise anti-scientific arguments in veils of nationalism, religion as well as cultural pride. Being an atheist does not automatically make one a rationalist, sceptic, or even a liberal. However, there is a much higher possibility of some of the default traits being present in us as




Artwork by Orijit Sen

many of them, but it stands as an indelible mark in world history as to the outcome of politically correct speeches and the PC culture in general. In our quest to achieve alpha status in liberalism, we have swallowed the venomous bits of hate speech as well, allowing it to pass of their right to have a

compared to a theist as we have removed one toxic influence from our lives. It is thus vital for us to know the difference between freedom of conscience and taking pride in our traditions, values, cultures, nations, castes, races and genders that promote its suppression. The distinguish can be as obvious as the camouflaged but still vastly present caste system of India, or as blatant as state mandated absurd rituals to compare societal differences to those of say, troops defending our borders. Governments and individuals are able to perform multiple tasks together and such arguments hold no basis to those that defend their stance saying examples such as “men fight wars

while women argue for equal pay” or “you fight for LGBT rights but don't care about the soldiers defending your borders”. As I cringe in envy over the openness of American comedy to push boundaries and protestors kneeling down on the national anthem as a non-violent protest, the Supreme Court of India very recently made mandatory playing of the Indian national anthem before each and every movie in a public theatre, where all (except disabled) individuals must stand or face actual prison of 3 years (or even more). Such forced patriotism dilutes our freedom as individuals and instil fear of protesting peacefully. Each and every individual, with all our flaws, insecurities and anti-

national sentiment together make up the idea of a nation, and not vice versa. No law book or goody-good individual has any more right to define what a nation is than, say, an individual who isn't all proud of its country.

Barbaric news of denying equal rights to harsh punishments given to individuals speaking for equality or advocating for the freedom of conscience is what keeps us motivated to utilize our privilege, no matter how big or small, and be an active voice for them and against bigotry. As always, we strive to make the Secular World magazine as inclusive as possible, so if there are topics you'd like us to cover write to us on the email provided below. I look forward to your constructive feedback. 

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BRITISH PEOPLE AND WITCHCRAFT-STYLE EXORCISM IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

Leo Igwe

Recently, a religious [event](#) was organized by Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) in London. The general overseer of this church, a Nigerian geneticist turned pastor, Dr D. K. Olukoya, ministered at this healing and deliverance program. Pastor Olukoya is one of those African pastors who have dedicated their evangelical enterprise to 'disgracing and destroying the ministry of witchcraft', and his witch finding and witch expelling techniques will be on display at the event.

British people should be concerned about this program. They should be worried because this is not just a mere religious function but a program that poses potential risks to children in black communities. Not too long ago, the British society witnessed cases of witchcraft related abuse of children in its black communities. People were outraged to learn about the horrific ways children were branded as witches and then tortured and killed by their relatives in the course of exorcism. The cases of Victoria Climbe and Kristy Bamu

are still fresh in our minds. In the cases of Climbe and Bamu, British authorities launched investigations that traced the problem to healing and deliverance services of pentecostal churches in Africa and in African initiated churches in the black communities.

The reports claimed that the problem was widespread and under reported. It is not clear the measures which the British authorities have taken since then to address these harmful church practices. However, with this healing and deliverance program in London, it seems that there may not be any effective mechanism in place yet. I understand that tackling harmful religious practices in minority communities can be difficult in a place like Britain because the authorities do not want to be accused of racism or abuse of religious freedom.

But look, concerned persons should not be deterred by such misguided charges and claims because there is nothing racist in putting a stop to a practice that clearly harms or puts at risk the lives of

children particularly in black communities. What is actually racism here is allowing such a problem to fester. The exercise of witchcraft style exorcism is not an exercise in freedom of religion but rather an abuse of it. And I want to add, it is not an exercise in multiculturalism either. It is an abuse of it.


Now let us take a critical look at this pastor's antecedents and the church activity to show why British people should be concerned about staging such a healing and deliverance program. Olukoya is a pastor who ministers on how to overcome and dismantle witchcraft and branches of his MFM church have adopted varieties of anti witchcraft prayer programs. He has written books and delivered sermons in this respect. Let me say it here that nobody is against Olukoya exercising his rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. However, beyond writing books on witchcraft and saying what he thinks about the cause of human problems, (and all concerned



British persons should pay close attention here), Olukoya organizes events where he exorcizes people of witchcraft and other demonic spirits.

Now I want British people to ask: what is Pastor Olukoya going to heal people of? What is the disease in question? In fact is Pastor Olukoya a healer? When did he become a healer? We know he is a geneticist not a healer, a pastor not a healer and if he is a healer, where was he trained?

If he is not a trained healer, why should he be allowed to practice in London? If he is healing without any training; is that not against the law? Is he not putting the lives of people at risk? Will Olukoya conduct deliverance services, as the program says? What is he delivering the British people from? Is it from mental, physical or spiritual diseases? Or from demons, evil spirits, witches and wizards? The issue is not just in his witchcraft teachings that should be debunked, challenged and critically examined, but the practice of 'healing and deliverance' which is what is bringing him to London.

It is in the practice of healing and deliverance that the superstitious belief in witchcraft becomes a harmful exercise that puts the lives of vulnerable persons at risk. This is what led to the deaths of Victoria Climbe and Kristy Bamu. Allowing such an exercise to go ahead in the name of multiculturalism or to turn a blind eye on it because one is avoiding being called a racist is doing a great disservice to the British society. It is an insult to the memory of Victoria Climbe, Kristy Bamu and other children who have lost their lives to witchcraft-style exorcism in the black communities. A stitch in time, they say, saves nine. 

Leo Igwe is a Junior Research Fellow at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, at the University of Bayreuth in Germany. He holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy. The topic of his ongoing doctoral research is: Negotiating Witchcraft Accusation: A Case Study of the Dagomba in Northern Ghana. His research interests include witchcraft and magic, non-religiosity, atheism and unbelief in Africa.



AAI LEGAL / SUPPORT FUND

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -

There are places in the world where being "out" as an atheist – or, for that matter, even expressing open doubt about the dominant religious



faith – makes you a target of violence and incarceration.

AAI receives pleas from atheists and skeptics every month seeking protection and asylum assistance and who have few other



places to turn. While we collect information and report on these cases to international human rights groups, AAI also extends



help as it can through its affiliate groups. Our legal support fund provides legal assistance to those



arrested and asylum support to those seeking to find safer sanctuary.

The demand for such services far exceeds our resources and



rely solely on contributions from our supporters. Please consider contributing to the AAI Legal / Support Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



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PERFECT ASSASSINATION OF A JORDANIAN WRITER

Hakim Khatib

A perfect assassination starts with demonizing of a person and ends with a condemnation of the assassin.

On 25 September 2016, the prominent Jordanian writer Nahed Hattar, 56, was shot dead ahead of a trial before the courthouse in Jordan's capital Amman. He was accused of sharing a caricature deemed offensive to Islam on his Facebook page. Hattar was an outspoken leftist, secular writer and a self-described Christian atheist, known for his controversial views on issues regarding refugees, his support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and his hostility to movements of political Islam.

According to the Jordanian state news agency Petra, an armed man fired three shots at the writer at close range in front of the courthouse ahead of a hearing. The long-bearded shooter, who was wearing a long grey robe characteristic of ultra-conservative Muslims, was identified as the 49-year-old Jordanian imam Riad Ismail Ahmed Abdullah, from one of Amman's poor neighbourhoods—Hashmi. The perpetrator, Abdullah, was referred to the state security court on terrorism-related charges and might face the death penalty.

But why was Hattar arrested in the first place?

Contempt of Religion

Hattar was arrested on 13 August 2016 on charges of insulting Islam upon

sharing a cartoon on his Facebook page. The writer removed the post thereafter and wrote that the cartoon “mocks terrorists and their concept of God and heaven. It does not infringe God's divinity in any way”.

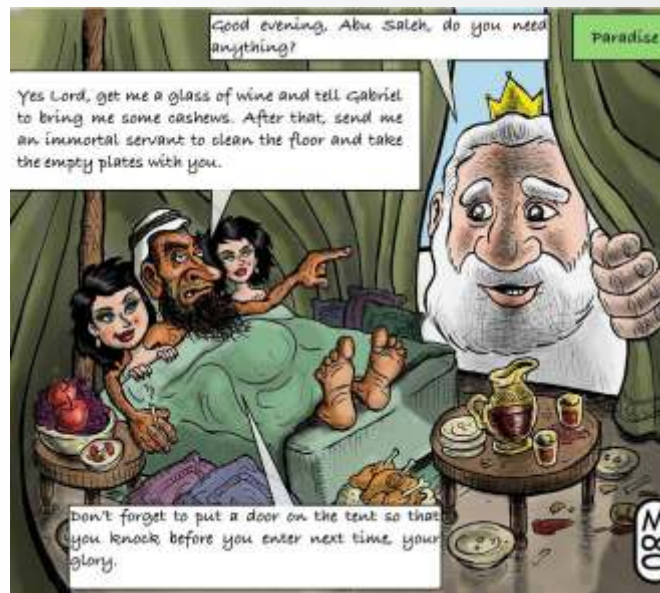
This is not the first time Hattar's life was endangered, but it was the last. Hattar's [family said](#) “the writer was given no protection by authorities” despite of him receiving hundreds of death threats recently. Although Hattar's family filed

who ordered an investigation into the issue, which resulted in multiple charges against Hattar.

Hattar was charged with “inciting sectarian strife” and publishing material that offends “other people's religious feelings” under articles 150 and 278 of Jordan's penal code. In addition to these accusations, Hattar has become the anti-Islam devil, who purposely [causes offence to Jordanian Muslims](#). On 13 August when Hattar was arrested, Al-Jazeera reported that: “Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood issued a statement in response to Hattar's comments that called on the government to take strong measures against those who publish seditious material that undermined national unity”.

Noting that freedom of expression is protected for all but within the constitutional and legal limitations, [Mulqi said few weeks ago](#) that he will not tolerate crossing the red lines of the sacred, and that the laws will be firmly applied on all those who commit such intrusive practices in the religious and conservative Jordanian society, which always defends the sanctity of religion.

Hattar denied the charges and commented before closing his account on Facebook, “Those who were offended by the drawing are of two types: Good-intentioned people, who didn't understand that the intended irony of the cartoon mocks how terrorist Daesh militants and the Muslim brotherhood envision God and heaven. I respect and appreciate those people.”



The “offensive” cartoon

200 names of people who had threatened the writer (including that of the assassin) and handed them over to the governor of Amman Khaled Abu Zeid, protection was denied because there was, as estimated by the governor, “no real threat”.

Upon sharing that cartoon on social media, a storm of hysteria blew against Hattar, led by lawyers and media campaigns, mainly by Al-Jazeera and well-known individuals such as the Jordanian Prime Minister Hani Mulqi,

The second type, he continued, represents “Islamists and Daesh sympathizers, who hold a pathological imagination of man's relationship with the divine. They took advantage of the caricature to settle political issues that have nothing to do with what they claim.”

After all, Hattar shared the cartoon. He didn't draw it. But why is the cartoon offensive?

Heaven in a Jihadist Mind

The cartoon is offensive because it is simply cynical. The cartoon depicts Allah opening the flap of a tent and having a conversation with a bearded man, who is smoking in bed with two women asking Allah to serve him wine and take empty plates with him. While the cartoon portrays heaven, there are three sarcastic captions beside the drawing and they read as follows:

Allah: “May your evening be joyous, Abu Saleh, are you in need of anything?”

Jihadist: “Yes Lord, bring me a glass of wine from over there and tell Angel Gabriel to bring me some cashews. Afterwards, send me an eternal servant to clean the floor, and take the empty plates with you.” Jihadist continues: “Don't forget to install a door for the tent so that you knock before you enter next time. You are glorious!” Parody involving Islam has inspired violence in

various countries across the world and is still one of the most sensitive, yet dangerous forms of expression.

Persistent Controversy

Although many journalists and human rights activists condemned the assassination of Hattar and considered the attack a staggering assault against humanity, there are some who celebrated the assassination and considered the attack a victory against blasphemy. While social media accounts of prominent conservatives were celebrating Hattar's death, saying he deserved it for blasphemy, official response of the Jordanian government was with condemnation. This, however, wasn't the case before the murder happened.

Upon his sharing of the cartoon, a backlash lambasting Hattar swept conservative and non-conservative social media, in which people called on the government to arrest him. He was even attacked for being Christian and a secularist.

There are further reports that question the government's role of creating a hostile atmosphere that incites violence, especially that judiciary, Jordanian government, and several writers, lawyers and journalists, had demonized Hattar over the past weeks,


which made him a target for extremism.

The violence-encouraging atmosphere created by governments in Arab countries is not novel. [There are other examples of which writers were criminalized](#) or put to death such as the stories of Farag Foda, Islam Al-Buhairi, Sayed Al-Qemany, Naguib Mahfouz, Nasr Abu Zayd, Haidar Haidar, Mohammad Wild Imkheter, Fatima Naoot, Ashraf Fayyad, Karam Saber and many others.

Contrary to previous governmental accusations of Hattar, a government spokesman Mohammad Momani described the shooting as a “heinous act” and commented that, “the law will be strictly enforced on the culprit who did this criminal act.”

Calling on the people of the Jordanian society of all faiths and backgrounds to stand united behind the leadership of the Hashemite family against terrorism and troublemakers, the General Dar Al-Iftaa (the house of religious regulations) denounced the killing of Hattar, stressing that “the religion of Islam is innocent of this heinous crime.”

Expectedly, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan also condemned killing Hattar. Badi Rafayeh, Muslim Brotherhood spokesman in Jordan, said that the group “condemns this heinous attack”. “We warn against inciting communal strife and invite everyone to maintain security and stability in our beloved country,” he added.

These statements remain controversial because they are exactly contrary to what was said before the writer's death. The problem doesn't lie in a so-called divide between secularists and the Muslim brotherhood in the Jordanian society, as was suggested by Western media. Condemnation of the attack inside Jordan was loud after Hattar's death and equally so was the demonization of him before his death. Is this a perfect assassination? 



Hakim Khatib is a political scientist works as a lecturer for politics and culture of the Middle East, intercultural communication and journalism at Fulda and Darmstadt Universities of Applied Sciences and Phillips University Marburg. Hakim is a PhD candidate in political science on struggle over ideological power in the Middle East and the link thereof to democracy at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the editor-in-chief of the Mashreq Politics and Culture Journal (MPC Journal).

www.hakimkhatib.com

SOCIAL-MEDIA-OPHOBIA

John Hamill

When discussing hot-button topics like faith, religious discrimination and secularism, social media can be a minefield. One person's gentle joke can be another person's outrageous insult.

An intention to poke fun at a silly idea can be perceived as abuse aimed at a vulnerable minority. Godwin's Law states that as an online discussion grows, a comparison involving Hitler will become inevitable. Those familiar with online discussions about religion will have observed many similar phenomena. For example, any online debate about the harms that can be caused by some tenets within Islam, no matter how careful we are to avoid bigotry against Muslim people, seems to eventually result in accusations of "Islamophobia".

In 2014, the Muslim reformer Maajid Nawaz sent the tweet illustrated alongside. While most people who respect human rights and democratic values would see this as a simple exercise in free expression by a then parliamentary candidate, the result was a series of death threats.

This is a problem for everyone who engages in public discourse on these

topics, including organizations like Atheist Alliance International. While it is hugely important to avoid prejudice against individuals or specific groups of people, it is also crucial to criticize

Social Media

The prevalence of contemporary social media has increased the rate at which many organizations issue communications, including Atheist Alliance International. Especially given the abbreviated nature of some popular social media services, it is often the case that some comments can be misunderstood. Just as frequently, a decision not to comment on a specific issue (or to remove an existing comment) can also generate confusion. The rapid rate at which stories are circulated (with the commensurate difficulties in verifying the veracity of every detail) can cause difficulties too.

All representatives of Atheist Alliance International aim to ensure that all external communications are presented in a professional manner, while also allowing for an audience that may

appreciate fun and engaging content. In this regard, close attention is given to the United Nations Department Of Public Information Social Media Guidelines, as an example of best practice. However, there are additional issues that arise in the context of communications, which are specific to discussions around atheism, secularism and religiosity.



Radical
@MaajidNawaz

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This Jesus & Mo @JandMo cartoon is not offensive&I'm sure God is greater than to feel threatened by it الله أكبر منه



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harmful ideas. Humour can also form an important part of such vital criticism. However, especially in the context of fast-paced discussions on social media, it is useful to always keep sight of a clear bright line between comments about ideas and comments about people. No idea is above scrutiny and critique, while no person is beneath dignity and respect.

The issues that arise within contemporary discourse, which are typically of interest to atheists and secularists, may involve a number of different aspirations. For example, Atheist Alliance International supports the human right to the freedom of religion (Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights). This human right requires that no person should be persecuted or discriminated against, based on their religious beliefs or their philosophical convictions, including the absence of any religious belief or a conviction in atheism or secularism.

At the same time, Atheist Alliance International also supports the aspiration of many atheists and secularists, to see robust criticism of harmful religious ideas. Such criticism may take many forms, including polemic and satire. Given the enormous human misery that is caused across the globe by some of the tenets within several religions, it is entirely appropriate that the criticism of these doctrines should be strident.

Atheist Alliance International believes that these two aspirations are not in conflict. It is possible to protect all persons from sectarian persecution and discrimination, while at the same time offering robust criticism of harmful religious ideas. The output of the Alliance through various communications channels, seeks to address and promote both of these aspirations.

Statement of Principles

As part of the Atheist Alliance International commitment to human rights, it is important to note that rights are associated with people and not ideas. Human beings have rights, while dogmas and doctrines do not. People should be protected from persecution, victimization and discrimination, while ideas should be subject to examination, appraisal and critique.

Atheist Alliance International supports the human right to the freedom of expression (Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights). The only reliable way that humanity has been able to acquire new knowledge, has been through hypothesis and experiment. A conjecture is offered and refutations are suggested. Only those ideas that survive this process, by agreement with observations, are retained. The right to freedom of expression is a vital component to this process and attempts to inhibit this right are anathema to a society that is seeking to learn and promote human flourishing.

While respecting laws that proscribe incitement to violence, Atheist Alliance International representatives do not censor criticism of ideas within social media communications and

AAI STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -



Alexander Aan, Indonesia

As part of our work in defending and protecting atheists, AAI has

also established a student scholarship fund to help the disfranchised build new lives as well as to promote rationalism and science in their own communities.



The AAI Foundation awards student scholarships to atheists in impoverished or disadvantaged countries to seek education and training outside of their country: Some in order to start a life in a new country, others to allow them to return to their homeland to educate the next generation.



Please consider contributing to the AAI Student Scholarship Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD

discussions. This includes the parody and mockery of ideas, which some people may find offensive. Commentary that involves sarcasm or caricature directed at atheism or secularism, is not censored either.

The Atheist Alliance International social media output is used to promote the work of the organization and to encourage the criticism of harmful religious ideas. It is not used to disparage individual people or to malign specific groups of people.

Common Points of Contention

While principles for social media communications may be relatively easy to outline, their practical implementation may involve a number of grey areas. Some common difficulties arise within contemporary discourse, for example in relation to ad hominem remarks. Personal insults are typically ignored when they are received. There is nothing to be gained by the organization, from trading pejorative adjectives with individuals, through Atheist Alliance International communications channels.

Special care is taken when offering commentary on current affairs, particularly when events relate to the actions of identifiable individuals or groups of people. For example, making allegations of sectarianism or religious bigotry, can sometimes require knowledge of the thought process that was followed by another person. However, it is also the case that some public statements can fit neatly within accepted definitions of specific prejudices. For example, it is not difficult to find quotations from Christian votaries that identify the cause of natural disasters as homosexuality. This clearly involves an irrational fear or hatred of gay people and should properly be described as homophobia.

Within Alliance social media channels, the principle of charity is commonly observed. That is, when communications are received through social media, it is desirable to initially assume the best possible interpretation. This is especially important for an international organization that may be managing discussions with people who are not using their first language.

It is also advisable to avoid the use of terms that have contested definitions. For example, bigotry against Muslim people is real and it is an abuse of the human right to freedom of religion, which should be strongly opposed. At the same time, some tenets within Islam can be harmful and it is important that such ideas should be criticized. However, the term "Islamophobia" has frequently been used to conflate abhorrent prejudice against some Muslim people, with crucial opposition to some Islamic doctrines.



Existing to improve the quality of life for the impoverished and disadvantaged around the world, on a basis of science and reason.

“If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making a Difference?”

The AAI Foundation sponsors good works and volunteerism to promote nontheism, science and reason around the world.

Religious privilege and superstition are strongest in countries where the populace struggle for daily survival and where education is reserved for the privileged. The AAI Foundation works to counter such forces through the sponsoring of quality-of-life projects including health care, public infrastructure, and education.

The AAI Foundation also provides opportunities for our members to participate in cultural exchanges volunteer with AAIF projects around the world. AAI Members can spend anywhere from two weeks to a year with a local AAI affiliate to improve local conditions or even just to see a new country and experience a new culture.

Learn more about the AAI Foundation and our current projects, and how you can get involved, at:

<http://www.atheistalliance.org>



Atheist Alliance International consistently condemns human rights abuses aimed at Muslim people, including breaches of the human right to the freedom of religion. Such condemnation is best achieved through the use of clear terminology that has widely accepted definitions. For example, there is no confusion about what the term "discrimination against Muslim people" means or why it should

unconstitutional

Atheist Alliance International will not be deflected from either criticizing harmful ideas within any religion, or else demanding the full vindication of every person's human right to the freedom of religion.

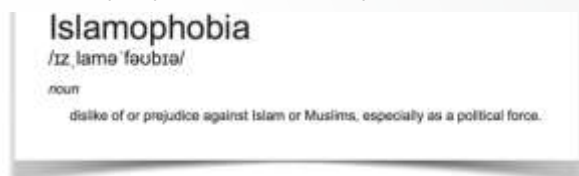
The representatives of many different religions frequently seek to inhibit free expression, using appeals to blasphemy laws or by conflating criticism of ideas with discrimination against people. Atheist Alliance International rejects such confections and opposes the dilution of free expression using

systems, opinions, and institutions, as long as this does not amount to advocating hatred against an individual or groups...

The Venice Commission underlines however that it must be possible to criticize religious ideas, even if such criticism may be perceived by some as hurting their religious feelings."

Atheist Alliance International supports the principles described in this report, published by the Venice Commission. Those principles have informed the approach of the Alliance to our social media communications policies.

Another that term that can cause



be opposed, but a Google Search for the definition of the word "Islamophobia" returns the following result:

Many members of Atheist Alliance International will dislike specific tenets of Islam, especially if they are politically enforced as part of the civil law. It is entirely legitimate to oppose such doctrines and in many cases, it is very important to do so. Challenging the imposition of religious dogma as part of the civil law within any State, does not constitute bigotry or prejudice. Rather, such campaigns can often liberate women and minorities from religiously-inspired persecution.

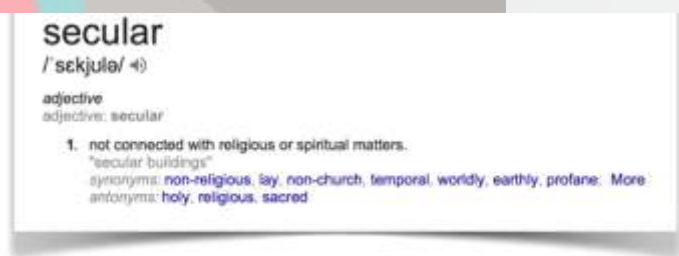
As an example, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is an international body that consists of 57 Muslim-majority countries. It publishes an annual "Report on Islamophobia", which offers the following as examples of "Islamophobia":

- The banning of halal slaughter by some European countries, and the opinion that religion has no precedence over animal welfare
- The appearance of the word 'Allah' in Arabic, on jewelry that was worn in a Katy Perry music video
- The determination of an Ohio school district that forcing children to memorize the 'Five Pillars of Islam' is

blasphemy laws. This is a position that has already been described, by bodies formed to consider issues surrounding constitutional law and human rights law. For example, in their "Report On The Relationship Between Freedom Of Expression And Freedom Of Religion", the Venice Commission stated the following:

"In the Commission's view, however, in a true democracy imposing limitations on freedom of expression should not be used as a means of preserving society from dissenting views, even if they are extreme. Ensuring and protecting open public debate, should be the primary means of protecting inalienable fundamental values such freedom of expression and religion, at the same time as protecting society and individuals against discrimination..."

The purpose of any restriction on freedom of expression must be to protect individuals holding specific beliefs or opinions, rather than to protect belief systems from criticism. The right to freedom of expression implies that it should be allowed to scrutinise, openly debate, and criticise, even harshly and unreasonably, belief



confusion, due to various different definitions being used by various different people, is "secular". Google Search returns this definition:

Since Atheist Alliance International supports the human right to freedom of religion, the kind of secular State that the Alliance campaigns for is not one that legislates to proscribe religion. When campaigning for secularism, Atheist Alliance International does not support privileges in law for atheist perspectives either. The Alliance is just as opposed to a State favouring atheism as it is to a State favouring religiosity.

During 2012, Pope Benedict made the following comments to the bishops of the USA, which suggest that secularism is a threat to the freedom of religion:


"... it is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realise the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the

political and cultural spheres. The seriousness of these threats needs to be clearly appreciated at every level of ecclesial life. Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion."

The State secularism that is promoted through Atheist Alliance International communications channels, is one that is synonymous with neutrality, and not one that is synonymous with discrimination against the religious. Atheist Alliance International believes that States should neither privilege nor hinder, either religiosity or atheism. The response to theocratic laws should not be the promotion of atheistic laws or anti-religious laws. Rather, it should be the promotion of State neutrality with respect to all faiths and none.

Conclusion

The mission of Atheist Alliance International is to challenge and confront religious faith, to strengthen global atheism by promoting the growth and interaction of atheist organizations around the world, and to undertake international educational and advocacy projects. The social media communications strategy of the Alliance has an important role to play within every aspect of this mission.

The criticism of harmful religious ideas is not just a legitimate activity but it is a vital part of the Atheist Alliance International mission. The Alliance has received direct criticism of our social media output in the past but we will not be distracted from promoting our mission through social media platforms or any other communications channels. All representatives of the organization will seek to publicize secular and atheist arguments through various communications channels, in a manner that does not harm anyone. We will do this by remembering that no idea is above scrutiny and critique, while no person is beneath dignity and respect. 



John Hamill has served on the national executive committee of Atheist Ireland for several years, including his participation in the first meeting of a sitting Irish Prime Minister with an atheist group. John also worked as part of Atheist Ireland's successful role within the Irish Marriage Equality referendum campaign.

BECOME A SUPPORTING MEMBER OF ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL!

Supporting AAI means promoting naturalism, science and reason while challenging and confronting religious privilege and discrimination against atheists and religious minorities around the world.

AAI's projects include funding new groups and conferences, school and social service projects, bringing attention to religious discrimination, as well as legal and asylum support for those targeted by religious bigots.

AAI operates entirely through the support of our members. Even more, if you live in the US, your donation to AAI is fully tax-deductible.

AAI members are also invited to directly participate in projects supported by AAI around the world, whether it be teaching or assisting a primary school class, participating in a speaking tour on atheism & humanism, or working with one of our affiliate groups to improve the local quality of life.

Your monthly contribution helps AAI sustain and expand our programs. Join our team and know that you are making a difference in challenging religion and expanding freethought around the world!



ATHEIST
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INTERNATIONAL

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER DICARLO

Atheist Alliance International

- Let's start with an introduction?

I'm a professor of Philosophy of Science and Ethics, I teach in the university of Toronto and Ryerson. I am also an author and I also in in a consulting business called critical thinking solutions.

-And what sort of work do you do with that?

-Oh, with that basically education, consulting work so basically what I'm doing with the critical thinking initiative but I've also gone over to businesses and looked over their mission statements and try to coordinate the systems within their businesses in terms of using and utilizing critical thinking to allow the employees to be better heard and better understood to consult a better communication and prime consumption.

-Can you define what you mean by critical thinking to help us to adopt it?

-Yeah, critical thinking is basically how we reflect on how we now believe in what we do and it allows us to figure out how we have gone to this points in our lives, what we see the world in a particular way, understand the world in a particular way. And it incorporates ways in which we can understand our personal biases and biases of others and how information is housed within a specific context within a time and a place and a situation, and there are a number of tools that allow us to better understand why it is we think and act

the way we do.

-Would you say that what would be the explanations for resistance to critical thinking?

-Oh, that's a great question! There have been a number of explanations against critical thinking, the ones that are implicit that you don't hear often is that those who are in positions of power know the people train in critical thinking will be better qualified to call them out on, you know, unfair policies, activities and sort of thing. In 2012, believe in or not, there was a school or I think a couple in Texas that refused to teach critical thinking and when asked why, they maintained in various ways that they don't need their students too smart, believe it or not, because they found that it took too much time in the class for the teachers to be questioned by the students. So they actually wanted to get rid of the critical thinking so that the students would be empowered with the capacity to challenge these teachers whatever they said something which sets doubts or suspect.

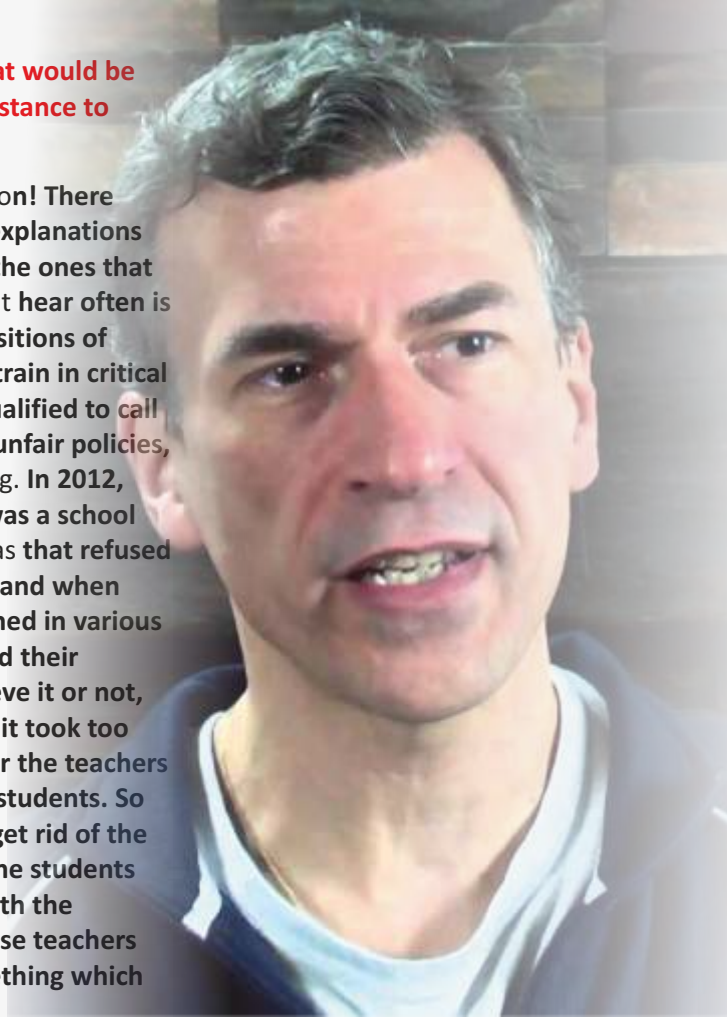
-And that was the parents that wanted them to teach?

-It was parents and a number of trustees on the board in Texas and you can actually look it up. I think they only show a report on that. I couldn't believe it.

-What do you think the consequences are going to be with this kind of neglect? It's almost abuse like not teaching to children out to think in a

way!

-It is! And what amazes me is we are in 2016, and a guy like me has to come along and tell the school boards "why don't you have this regulated and standard through the curriculum throughout Ontario, throughout Canada?" When you have 1800 little courses on business, you don't have a single one devoted to critical thinking. Not that business isn't important but come on, you know? You're literally your field at work has at its very root,



the aspects and the elements of critical thinking. I think a lot of teachers and administrators feel as though there's some kind of effect within education where those skilled just naturally come out because the teachers will teach in ways with the critical thinking principals will actually be present and for very good teachers, that's true! And you might remember some of your past teachers, the reason why you liked them is because they instil these very skills within you. My issue is that we haven't made this a kind of standard approach where all the teachers might have these skill sets and teach the kids and so all the kids are talking the same language using the same skills, so that those who have the privilege that I see in my first year classes at university, you can tell right away, these kids have gone through an ID program, these kids have gone through private schools and had very good teachers who, you know, really cared about giving them to be critically reflective about their own views and on views of others.

-Ok, that's interesting. Can you tell us more about the Guatemala Project?

-So Gale Miller approached me last year at the end of the conference and said, "Would you be interested in moving your initiative to other parts of the world?" to which I said "sure, send me an e-mail". And so by February, I was on a plane heading down to two high schools, one was a Roman Catholic and the other one a public high school. And basically using the exact same material I've been using in Ontario high schools. One class entirely in English and the other through Spanish translator, and these kids were like sponges, they absolutely loved it because they have never experienced anything like this before. And you could see the look on their faces, they were given the opportunity to discuss things within class, with their friends, and hold opinions that they have never thought they could and express them with tools that allow them to better

organise their thoughts, so when they discuss them, there was a greater emphasis on clarity, cohesion, understanding, reciprocity between both sides and expressing this notion of fairness and this idea that we are never going to all agree about things ever, we are never going to have a total consensus amongst society no matter where we are. What's really important though is that we have the skill sets that allow us to disagree and still get along. For me, that's the most important thing in critical thinking. Because we know we are going to disagree with people, we know that. But why should we hate people simply because they are disagree with us? If there are views cause pain and suffering, then you can see that people are going to be upset. But harm is a very tricky term. People might look at us as atheists and think what we are harming our children, because we are not raising them in a proper way, so they don't experience God, they don't experience a chance for an afterlife or we didn't baptise them. My sister to the State says, "I can't believe you didn't baptise to confirm your kid". I said I am sorry, and there is really no need for that. They can now, they are of age right now that they can go ahead.

They have that opportunity they'd been given, well I think the greatest gifts you can give to children is a gift of reason, the capacity to be able to think, carefully about what is going on out in the world.

-Do you think we take on the closet to be regressive left as advanced by initiative wise? I see it in people who are critical on Islam, you get called a racist if you dare to speak against Islam or criticisms on Christianity and intelligent design. I'm sure you've heard about the issue with Maryam Namazi. So that kind of...

-Yeah. It's not unanticipated. We could have seen this happening, right? You

know when you have literal attitudes there is going to come that time, a point in time, there is a line in the sand when you have to make decisions as to what are you more for in terms of fairness and human rights. So are you more for accommodating religious views over the mistreatment of women? So if you are a feminist and you are culturally sensitive to other people's views, where do you draw that line on the sand between standing up for say women's rights or the rights of children in some cases and the rights of religious freedom? This is always going to be a difficult issue. Because we could all agree here that we're not against the exercise of religious freedom. It's not as though we don't want people to be religious, they can be whatever they want. Really what it comes down to is harm. But it's those blurred lines of different types of harms and where you put your priorities in terms of valuing which harms take precedence over which other harms, right? So what's more important? Women's rights or freedom of religious practice?

-Or offence versus freedom of speech

-Yeah, exactly. There are no easy answers, but those are the types of questions that I think the skills of critical thinking will at least allow us to be able to tease that part, and be able to say, you know, where certain perspectives lie in relation to certain other viewpoints, versus rights, versus what is an ethical action, versus a harmful action and that sort of thing. There are no easy answers, these are very muddy waters. And we have to tread fairly carefully because we don't want to deny people's rights at the expense of our own personal views, we would admit that's not fair. So where do we come together on these types of things? And that's where I think we can better understand human biases and why we're going to differ in particular views. But if we all come at it from that approach I think it will be a much more

fruitful discussion and be able to understand how those differences that's gotten us to this particular time where we don't generally see eye to eye, but will help us to be able to facilitate discussion so that we can come to some kind of resolution.

- What are your thoughts about organized atheism on the national and international level?

-Just broadly speaking?

-Yeah. Of course you can answer through the lens of the Middle East, but also from the lens of Canada.

-I think what is the most important thing, what stirs people in different countries really is the "a" word, it tends to bother a lot of people because it instils a certain level of, I shouldn't say fear, but when people hear this term atheism, they tend to get their backs up a bit about it. Because they immediately look upon an atheist as somebody who is not only so different from them, it's like they're not even a different religion, you can be of a different faith, but at least you're still believing in something that's wrong, it's not our God, but you're still in our ballpark, as it were. When you are an atheist, I get it, I get the consistency of their argumentation, why they see atheists as being the enemy. Because what would be more threatening to a true believer than somebody who is a true unbeliever?

-Another true believer?

-Doesn't that make sense in their

world? If I were a true believer and somebody told me they were an atheist, I would see that person as being the greatest enemy. Because I don't understand how they can live without my particular God, I just don't get how their life can have any meaning. When this God has given us all of this, you are ungrateful, you are an ingrate. You are going against the wishes of this divine commanding being and you are a threat to my lifestyle. Because for all I know, in my ignorance, you are having daily orgies, eating babies, you're off to the abortion clinic every second week and you cannot be held accountable for your actions. So I get it, I get why people have such fear. And now there are many ways in which atheists can approach a dialogue, a discussion with those in other countries who don't share the same type of world view as they do. And it lies on a spectrum, and the spectrum basically goes from doing nothing to Christopher Hitchens. Where Hitchens is in their face, calling them out, showing them contradictions and calling a spade to spade. I'm somewhere further down on the spectrum, I take a Socratic approach, so I would give the person every opportunity to explain themselves. I would say to them "I want to believe in your particular world view. It's fascinating, you believe there's this God, and this God does what?" So I'm much more like Socrates, not accommodating to accepting their beliefs that may generate harm, but accommodating

them with the right to have a view that's different from mine. And then to walk them through it using what's known as the argumentum ad absurdum, so that you get them to try to see how their world view is inconsistent and contradictory. And I have more success with that because I'm trained as an academic. Hitch was a journalist, and Richard uses a very heavy handed approach, and all approaches are fine by me. You put information out there, you have the right to be ridiculed and if that's the approach some people want to use, that's their call, and I'm not going to tell them what they can and cannot do. It's a free world, we should live in an uncensored world, where information freely goes out there and people can say what they want to say.

-Another thing I'd like to ask is that about the critical thinking project. Are you considering to expand it to Eastern Europe?

-Yes, right now we are in China, Guatemala, Uganda, soon Iran and Afghanistan, Bolivia...

- So you have already spread to the Middle East?

- I have a gentleman in Washington DC now, who's taking all my materials and having them translated into Farsi and Urdu and Arabic, and he has people in Afghanistan and Iran who he will get this material to and they will disseminate from there. I'm very interested.

- Thank you 



REPRESENTING ATHEISTS INTERNATIONALLY

AAI has consultative status with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe's Commission on Human Rights— and will soon hold similar status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights!

www.AtheistAlliance.org



AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY GRAYLING

Atheist Alliance International

-Tell us a little about yourself.

My name is Anthony Grayling, I publish as A. C. Grayling and many people ask me why, and the answer is I started publishing when I was very young in my teens. Everybody was using their initials back in the day. Now a days it's mainly used by women writers and it's a way of masking gendered base. I used to write long time for the Financial Times, in their weekend section on book reviews and other articles. Five years in someone asked me is A.C. writing a manual, I was born and brought up in central Africa, Zambia, and in Malawi. My father had been working there so we were an ex-pat family and I have been in the UK teens onwards.

I always wanted to be involved with philosophy, because philosophy enables you to stick your nose into everything. It's been a constant joy, I've never worked because what comes as work has always been a pleasure.

-What made you realize you're an atheist?

Well I was brought up in a non-religious family so religion wasn't a thing in our family. I first encountered it going to school. In my junior school there were Christians, Jews, some Muslims and some people had no religion, but nobody talked about religion pretty much anyway. I really began to think

about it seriously when I went to secondary school which was a boarding school. There we had to go to chapel every day for ten minutes but that wasn't such a big deal either. But then I did some reading and realized it doesn't make sense to me.

-What would you say has been the biggest change in the philosophy in your lifetime?

When I first got into philosophy the big question was the theory of knowledge. That's something that got me involved and it still does, but about that time we have had a shift over from the philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. The shift has been in the neuroscience of philosophy, from where we know things, to the nature of how

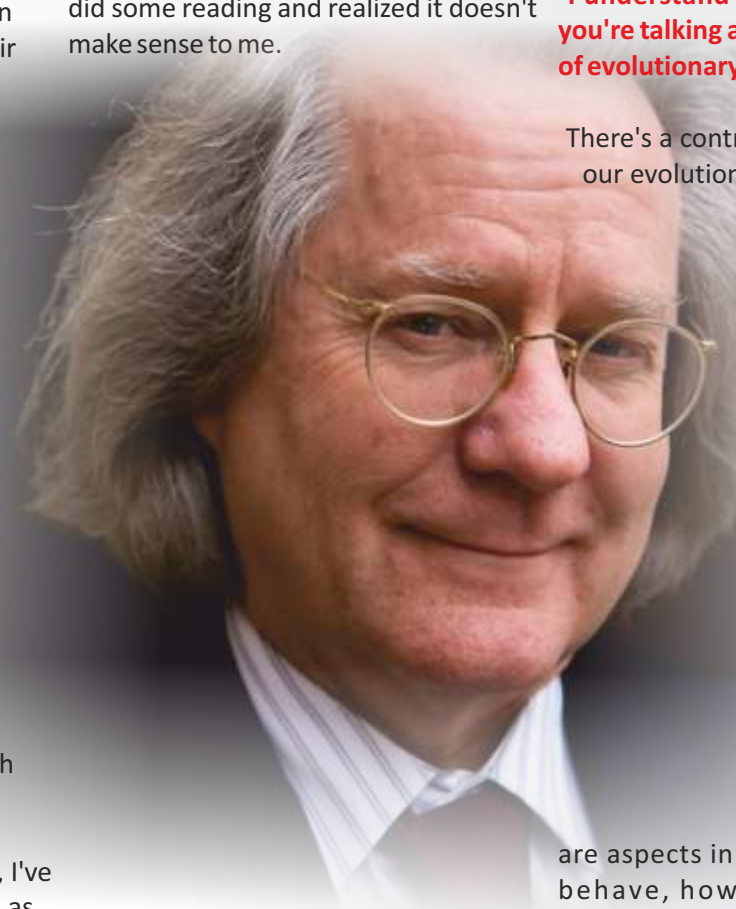
our different states of mind connect with the world. People think we'll know better of the world if we see it from the nature of language.

-I understand the philosophical term you're talking about, what do you think of evolutionary psychology?

There's a controversy about how much our evolutionary paths affect how we think. These people are worried about the idea that whatever is evolved is natural and whatever is natural has to be accepted or some even go so far as to say it is good. But then there are things like tribes, oppression and all those other things are somehow ingrained in the architecture of our minds. It is obvious that there

are aspects in the way human beings behave, how they think, how our cognitive factors actually function and the way we evolved. But at the same time, as protective beings, we are able to moderate some of these impulses and direct the very natural impulses that we have towards reproduction or aggression or self-preservation. We can induce ethical considerations over this and we can direct these impulses or we can master them.

That's not just sublimation of thought, but a much more general view that conscious, self-reflecting attitudes can direct our actions. Right from ancient



times, from the time of antiquity, the idea of self-mastery has been a really important element in civilization which has enabled us to control impulses, urgencies, and to be able to differ present satisfaction for long term gains, and has been a very important factor in the human understanding. Self-discipline is one of the most liberating things of a civilization.

-Are you familiar on the term regressive left? What's your take on that?

In the UK we're just starting to get that the US has started to get excessively politically correct and it's a great tragedy. I think of myself right now as someone in general political sense what Americans describe as a liberal or Europeans describe as a left wing, so I'm very depressed to see the regressive left use up the work that the progressive left is trying to do in the way of achieving social justice and fairness in society, more open minded attitudes towards gays and transgender people and same sex marriage and all those good things that progressives are interested in. What's happened with the regressive left is that at its root things like PC attitudes about race and gender and sex aside are good, I mean the intention is good, to be inclusive, to get away from stereotyping people, to get away from any kind of discrimination, that was the idea around a quarter of a century ago. But what's happened now is it's become a kind of a fetish. So now you can't say anything that will upset any minority group or sub-group. So you have to get trigger warnings, you've got to be very sensitive about people's feelings. There are certain places, universities are particularly one of them, which should be safe spaces for free speech, so anybody could say anything and the way you deal with that is, if its bad

KASESE HUMANIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -



Located in rural East Uganda, the Kasese School has been supported by AAI since 2008 and has provided a secular education based in science and reason for over 3,000 students.

90% of the schooling in Uganda is provided by religious organizations. The Kasese Humanist Primary School is unique in providing a Humanist education.

Your support allows us to underwrite the costs of schooling for rural students, including books, teachers, meals, and dorm rooms!



Thank you again for your ongoing support!



free speech – give them a better free speech. (You) don't let people run away, don't let people hide behind “oh I'm feeling offended rather being hurt”. Universities shouldn't go for that agenda, neither should society really.

-What do you of organized atheism? Why do you think it's necessary and what do you think should be the approach?


There are two aspects in which atheists do good work if they're public about their atheism and organize so that there is a body of people to whom they can relate. People wondering about their faith often feel very lonely or are very observant in their family. But there should be a fair amount of people (in society) who don't follow a religious commitment so that they can ease up around people who share their ideas and learn from them. So from an organized point of view the world will benefit making it possible, giving information to people to come out as atheists. The second thing is that when theists are at their worse, they cause divisions, quarrels, arguments and conflicts. They can result in discrimination, they can result in forcing women to occupy second class status in society, interrupt scientific education and development for example they can be against stem cell research or promote ideas about creationism in all these different ways do a great deal of harm. Another thing therefore that organized atheism can do is promote critical thinking, scepticism and challenge those views while providing an alternate voice of clarity and reason.

-What kind of international projects would you recommend or AAI?

One of the important things of having an international organization the outreach. In some places like Canada and UK its okay to be an atheist, nobody is going to give you hard time. In other places like

Turkey, Iraq or Saudi Arabia it's very hard to be an atheist, certainly hard to be an atheist in public and you might suffer discrimination or even persecution. Having an international organization means you have friends, colleagues in parts of the world where it's safe to be an atheist who can help defend civil & human rights, and try to help people being arrested in some way. Sharing ideas, resources is good too, also being able to be in a position to invite speakers or visitors from other countries who can help with the work of spreading atheist ideas.

-We have started an atheist census project and around 283,000 took part in it and what surprised us after analysing the data is that almost 75% of participants were male and some 22-23% or less were females. That static helped us realize that we have a great gender imbalance and this reflects globally. Philosophically, what do you think might be the root of the problem? Do women find the word theist too aggressive? Do women prefer to be called secular, sceptics or humanists instead?

I mean it could be, I could think about a number of things but they could be generalizing and stereotyping which is always a bad thing. Independently as atheism and theism, women seem to not sign up for this "ism" or that "ism" or some strong political or social affiliation. This may have something to do with the fact that women are sometimes more socially conservative than men. You look at surveys on people's attitudes towards things like sex, politics or same sex marriage and you see women generally tend to be more socially conservative than men. This is an interesting point because we're all very keen for more participation by women and they would probably be very effective and very good at minimizing war, brining social justice and equality in society but there also might be a problem at promoting a sort of moralistic attitude at society as well. Another thing is that for a lot of women especially when they have children or families there are much more important things than the big quarrel between atheism or humanism or any 'ism' because the realities of life, looking after a baby, looking after sick people etc fill up the whole horizon of life and these things are more urgent. You can't say we're going to switch off the baby for a couple of hours like a computer you know. Some people say there are so few women in the upper reaches of academia in some subjects as compared to other subjects and you ask why that is and of course the main reason is the glass ceiling of discrimination against them but another reason is that there are more important things for women as children and family life. So it could be how the world is seen by women makes it much less urgent that they should be dealing with questions on atheisms and humanisms. But I agree with you that to be a humanist would be a more attractive and gentler than to be an atheist which would be much more aggressive and separate you from other people. 

STAND UP FOR REASON CAMPAIGN

In Uganda, hundreds of children are marked as "witches" each year by Christian evangelists who market their exorcism services to local villages that have suffered misfortune or loss.



These children are abandoned, attacked, and maimed or even killed by their friends and family.

Those who are fortunate to survive are rendered orphans who are forced to beg and steal to survive.



HELP US STAND UP
FOR REASON IN UGANDA.



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DINKOISM – THE WORLD'S GREATEST RELIGION

Partha Sarathy

In the world's largest democracy in India, the plague of religion spreads anti-progressive policies and encourage mob justices like never before. Dinkoism parodies a cumulative of all religions to showcase this. The following article is sarcastic and should be taken as such.

Most religions are losing support, and attendance is declining in churches, mosques, and temples. But there is one religion sweeping across the world, gaining followers, and influencing world affairs. Like all verified sources of news are spread only via Facebook & Whatsapp, it is learned that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared this the world's greatest religion. Welcome to Dinkoism, an ancient Indian religion widely considered the best, fastest growing, and oldest.

What is Dinkoism?

Dinkoism is an ancient Indian religion that worships Lord Dinkan (cheese be upon him) as supreme creator and protector of the universe. Dinkan took the form of a humble mouse, clothed in a yellow vest and bright red underwear, to bring salvation to all living beings. Dinkan punishes the evil, brings solace to the needy, and maintains peace and prosperity. Dinka Puranam, the holy book of Dinkoism, has been called the most important book in world history for its life-changing message of

salvation.

History of Dinkoism

Dinkoism is the oldest religion on earth. Fossil records show that dinosaurs worshipped a small mouse 75 million years ago. Dinkan was also worshipped by the Australopithecus in Ethiopia 3 million years ago, and by ancient Egyptians 5,000 years ago. Dinkoism has shaped the modern world, and influenced all modern religions. You could say Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are all parodies of Dinkoism. Ancient Dinkoist towns in South India were centers of learning, and attracted students from around the world. A brown-skinned carpenter named Jesus came from Jerusalem to Kerala to study Dinkoism two thousand years ago, and his subsequent teachings reflect the love and compassion of Dinkoism.

Core beliefs

Dinkoism is not monolithic, and numerous sects flourish with their own beliefs. However, here are some of the more popular teachings of Dinkoism –

Animism – Dinkoists hold all life to be precious, including porcupines, piranhas, plants, and primates. There is no conceit greater than the notion that god has human attributes.

Prophet-drawing – All Dinkoists are

required to draw a picture of our prophet Kannan Attingal at least once a year. Those who draw the prophet once a month get 72 ice creams in heaven.

Equality – Dinkoism rejects all forms of oppression and discrimination, including racism, sexism, casteism, patriotism, and Trumpism.

Ear hair – It is our sacred duty to grow ear hair. “Be different from the infidels: let your ear hair grow and trim your mustaches”, the Magnificent Mouse taught us.

Feminism – Dinkoism is the only religion that encourages women to become priests, so women are leaving other religions in droves to embrace Dinkoism. If you are a female follower of Islam, Hinduism or Christianity, you really need to reconsider your life choices.

Hospitals – Pain and disease are part of Dinkan's plan, and it is presumptuous for men to seek to overthrow god's will. Dinkoism teaches us that hospitals are evil and doctors are villains.

Sin – Free will is an illusion. We are incapable of sin, since Dinkan controls all our thoughts and actions. Murderers murder because Dinkan wants them to. All that happens is for the good.

Seat belts – We reject the government's oppressive seat belt rule, since it violates our religious liberty. For Dinkan loved the world so much that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life, so why bother with seat belts?

Oppression against nontheists? Atheist Alliance International

The Freedom of Thought Report

A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Nonreligious



www.FreeThoughtReport.com

Lucky number – Dinkoists believe 13 is the luckiest number, since Lord Dinkan (cheese be upon him) had 13 disciples, and there are 13 major temples in Dinkoism.

Scientific evidence

NASA has confirmed that Dinkoism is

the most science-friendly religion on earth. There is no scientific discovery that the Dinka Puranam has not anticipated, and no scriptural claim in Dinka Puranam that science has failed to prove. Ancient Dinkoists had supersonic planes that could fly forward, backward, and sideways too. Research by Harvard University proves that the mouse is the

holiest animal on earth, and its urine has special chemical properties that cure everything from cancer to baldness. Stanford University demonstrated that the six holiest temples of Dinkoism in South India – built 7,634 years ago – fall along exactly the same longitude, 76.34° E. Archaeological excavations in Kerala have failed to locate ancient

DINKOIST RAGE BOILS OVER!

Millions of extremist Dinkoists held protest marches across Kerala, brought life to a standstill in the state, and sent notice to religious and political organizations that they cannot take Dinkoists for granted any more. Extremist Dinkoists have expressed outrage at popular Malayalam actor Dileep's movie **"Professor Dinkan"**, which inappropriately used the holy name of Dinkan, our most merciful Lord and Creator, and hurt the religious sentiments of billions of Dinkoism followers around the world.



telephone cables, clearly showing that our Dinkoist ancestors used wireless for communication. More recently, NASA's New Horizons spacecraft revealed

Dinkoism in newspapers and TV in recent years. Dinkoists celebrate Akshaya Jatteeya ("unending underwear") in early May every year in

the belief that purchasing red underwear (jatti) is auspicious and brings them prosperity for the rest of the year. Many celebrities, from Kozhikode district collector Prashant Nair to Tamil singer Srinivas to reality TV star Kim Kardashian, have proudly declared their Dinkoist faith. On

March 20, 2016, tens of thousands of Dinkoists gathered in the holy city of Kozhikode in South India for the first World Dinkoist Summit, and reaffirmed their pledge to convert or destroy the infidels. Dinkoism is the fastest growing religion in the United States too. Recently a Dinkoist devotee in Los Angeles purchased Dinkan license plates from the California state government for his car. In April 2015 a large group of youngsters gathered in Kochi in Kerala to convert to Dinkoism, sending shockwaves across India's socio-political landscape. More recently, Dinkoists won international praise for sending copies of the holy book Dinka Puranam to the millions made homeless by the earthquake in Italy.

Relevance in today's world



'Mooshika Sena', protectors of Dinkoism stage a protest against popular actor Dilip for using the name of the Holy Dinkan in bad light

Dinkan's image embossed on Pluto. While ancient Dinkoists had highly sophisticated technology, unfortunately all of it was stolen from us. About 267,984 years ago the evil Greenland army invaded the Dinkan civilization and stole all our technology, leaving us poor and backward.




Akshaya Jattiya festival celebration in Kerala, India

Dinkoism in popular culture

There has been a surge of interest in



Based in Los Angeles, Partha Sarathy is a volunteer with the International Society for Dinka Consciousness, and has been an active member of the leading Dinkoism groups in India.

Anxiety levels are rising around the world due to global warming, avian flu epidemics, and orange-colored bloviators. Millions are rushing to Dinkoism in search of solace and salvation. Dinkan constantly reminds the faithful of his divine powers by appearing on toasted bread and pancakes. Divine markings of Dinkan have shown up on everything from the stripes of zebra to the swirl of Starbucks coffee to the innards of pumpkins. Interest in Dinkoism boomed since 2008 when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Dinkoism to be the world's greatest religion. There is no greater testament to Dinkoism than the words of Albert Einstein – "When I read the Dinka Puranam and reflect about how Lord Dinkan created this universe everything else seems so superfluous". Welcome to Dinkoism. May the Great Mouse be with you! 

AMERICAN ACCEPTRUMPALISM

Robert Penczak with closing commentary by Aron Ra

Standing mute in the midst of an authoritarian slide is not a patriot's duty, not in a democratic republic. It's either an act of ignorance, intellectual cowardice, or moral treason – take your pick and take it quick. Because before you know it, the whole sad affair will likely have been whitewashed and normalized, leaving our nation to return to its bleary, dreary, pleasantly distracted slumber.

Histrionic cries from a 'sky is falling' alarmist?

"You betcha!" (sorry, but who needs Jefferson when armed with Sarah P?)

Back to the point: dismissal is a solid tactic when one can't afford to get bogged down with facts. And if you don't think name-calling works, just ask Lyin' Ted, Little Marco, and Crooked Hilary for their opinion. At any rate, buttressed by Orwellian 'Think Tanks', a smoothly oiled propaganda mill, profit-

driven news, and widespread scientific illiteracy, I think it's safe to say that with guile as their weapon and gullibility their targets' shield, Right-wing rhetoricians can safely man the ramparts till truth bends a knee or hobbles from the battlefield . . . you know, it's that 'create our own reality' magic that 'Bush's Brain' used to dote on.

So, sour grapes on the Left and war booty to the Right, yes . . . because the conservatives outplayed the liberals, and to the victor goes the spoils?

Well, I'm not sure conservatives are technically required to take blood oaths that compel them to call Mexicans rapists, pantomime disabled reporters, deride women as piggish, or embrace endorsements from the Ku Klux Klan. Then again, neither was such bloodsport a disqualifier. Not for the carnivorous base that simply lapped up the delicious morsels. Not for the conservatives in office who bravely stood in quasi-opposition until it became clear which way the wind had blown. And certainly not for the evangelicals, who welcomed into their bosoms a man who stands as the antithesis of just about everything upon which they supposedly base their values vote.

But getting back to the spoils . . .

While there are certainly a handful of right-leaning foxes who've been rewarded with luxury hen-houses, for those who aren't at the tippity-top of this empire wide pyramid scheme - Technology Assessment (thank you meaning the masses who sat on their asses or who actively voted us back to the past – for that vast bulk who count



themselves on the 'winning team' and either imagine they hold the high ground for having abstained from voting in a dysfunctional system, or who think America is now bound for greatness courtesy of their fantastic pick – I'm afraid we're all about to discover the meaning of Pyrrhic victory. Because on the planetary scale, we're all in the same boat (metaphorically speaking; no Arks allowed), and the weather's about to turn vile.

Let's start with the biggie. Scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have been warning us for decades that global warming, left unchecked, will prove catastrophic. Dismantling Congress's Office of Technology Assessment (thank you Newt) and throwing snowballs on the Senate floor (thank you Jim) change nothing. Ice sheets are still fracturing, glaciers receding, sea levels rising,



temperatures climbing, and atmospheric CO2 levels leaping toward the stratosphere.

The war in Syria, closing in on half a million casualties and over ten million people displaced, found its genesis in the worst drought it had experienced in nine hundred years. The military regards climate change as a threat multiplier. And the Lancet warns that in just a few decades, climate change could begin killing more than half a million people per year.

Of course none of this has persuaded our President Elect, who's far too busy tweeting at the cast from Hamilton to mull over such lyrics, and who famously characterized climate change as a hoax constructed by the Chinese government for the purposes of making U.S. manufacturing non-competitive. And whether you're looking at the Vice President the Secretary of State, or those who will head the

transition teams for NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and the Department of the Interior, you won't find a brain on the block that's not gummed up with crude or spouting nonsense like a geyser.

Not to worry though, because biologists have found an escape hatch for us: mass extinction. All right, they shouldn't get all the credit – researchers in other fields are aware of it too – and I'm certainly not endorsing the escape through death

plan as ideal. But the fact remains that most scientists who specialize in the study of life have concluded we are indeed in the midst of the sixth Great Mass Extinction, a label reserved for those events that wipe the majority of species off all the terrestrial and aquatic maps around the globe, events so precious rare they've historically occurred only once every hundred million years. Yet humanity, in the geological blink of an eye, has arguably propelled us out of the Holocene and into the Anthropocene, playing havoc

Chaired by Lawrence Krauss, renowned cosmological and theoretical physicist and director of the Origins Project at Arizona State, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists kept the Doomsday Clock positioned a scant three minutes from its death knell last year, explaining that, "unchecked climate change, global nuclear weapons modernizations, and outsized nuclear weapons arsenals pose extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity."

The two bits of positive news that kept the Bulletin from clicking the clock's hands forward to indicate that we're even nearer our terminal state than previously surmised were the Iran nuclear agreement and the Paris climate accord, both of which our incoming President has promised to torpedo as soon as he finds the launch codes.

An unofficial survey of experts at a Future of Humanity Institute conference puts the risk of human extinction at 19% by the end of this century. That rounds off to a one in five chance, the

same odds as our President Elect electing to erect his middle finger when asked which digit he prefers to use when grabbing eye-candy by the pants.

Phil Torres – founder of X-Risks Institute and author of *The End: What Science and Religion Tell us about the Apocalypse* – was reluctant to throw out a specific number but felt our risk of self-annihilation by 2100 was 25% or above. And in case a dystopian future crossed your mind, Sir Martin Rees – astrophysicist and former President of the Royal Society – pegs the chance of



with the environment and making ecosystem collapse an exciting new possibility for Chicken Littles the world over.

Now, given our natural aversion to accepting news we don't want to hear, I want to make sure we tear through any cognitive defense that would equip us with rose tinted glasses and seduce us into staying the course despite where we're clearly headed. So let's trash that last barrier with some relevant expertise.

civilizational collapse in the same time period at 50%, a flip of the coin: heads we're here, tails we're sorry.

Staggering to realize how precarious our perch is according to those who spend their time and energy evaluating such things. Hard to swallow. But it goes down better with a few bars of music and your choice of inebriant, this homicidal and suicidal game we're playing with Earth.

Anyhow, that is the disheartening backdrop that's left many a concerned citizen wanting to crawl under a rock and hide. We've got a broiling planet; an enfeebled media; a dysfunctional, intransigent body politic; and an ill-informed, inscrutable electorate – and all of these ills have been compounded by the recent election of perhaps the most anti-scientific, anti-intellectual, anti-humanitarian ticket in modern U.S. history.

Given those facts, I suggest it would be the height of irresponsibility to stare toward our darkening horizon, so laden with the potential for needless ruin and despair, and to bumble forward, perturbed of course, but nonetheless proceeding with business as usual.

Yet that, as a society, is precisely what we've been doing, and if we take our ethical responsibilities seriously, that needs to stop.

Immediately.

For the next edition, we will discuss the root causes that brought us to our perilous state, and what, precisely, I suggest we do about it. Till then, let me leave you with a few thoughts from Aron Ra, President of Atheist Alliance of America:

Atheists in America are facing a greater challenge than we have in the last ninety years. That challenge is political, but not so much cultural. We know that if we could poll the country on how many people are convinced that an actual

deity really exists, we would find that at least a third of the nation is atheist – regardless of whether they use that label. The problem is that where we thought religion was a condition in remission, it has relapsed with a vengeance and has taken over everything. It was never more necessary to form an alliance of atheists, but the work we have against us now is more than we can handle on our own. We're going to need the aid of those who won't or can't wear that label, and we'll need to work with believers who share our respect for church/state separation.

Had the election gone another way, we'd be making unprecedented progress. But as it is now, we first have to slow the regression. We have a lot of work ahead that HAS to be done by all of us, and we need as many allies as we can muster.



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My hope is that with all three branches of Federal government and the majority of states governed by conservative Christian dominionists determined to erect theocracy, the public will quickly awaken to just how insane that all is, and then we'll have the alliance we need to right the course of our country.

Atheist Alliance International and Atheist Alliance of America, which were once a single organization, are pleased to announce that we'll be working together closely as sister organizations, and we're looking forward to many productive collaborations, which will allow us to further our shared goals. 

FOR MORE INFO AND TO PURCHASE TICKETS GO TO: Imaginoreligion.ca

A CRITIQUE OF HUME'S DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION

Shahram Arshadnejad

Abstract

Hume's philosophy is empiricist and skeptic. He is considered an atheist and a non-believer. The dialogues take place between three participants based on the premise of the existence of God. Among the common theories about God, the design theory is up for debate in the dialogues. It considers the world as the craft of a maker. Cleanthes represents and defends the design theory that is also called "natural religion." Demea represents and defends revealed religion (faith based upon the scripture), and Philo is the skeptic philosopher. The objective of the dialogues is the critique of design theory. Design theory is considered closer to the truth at the conclusion of the dialogues.

Hume is widely considered an atheist with his empiricist and skeptic views of the world. In the dialogues, it is expected of Hume to remain a critic of religion, yet he stops short in discrediting religion as the conclusion of his argument. The core foundation of the dialogues is the premise about the existence of God

a priori. The question is about how to know God without proving his existence. The question is about how to know God without proving his existence. The



existence is assumed. Thus, the premise is: God exists (we know it for a fact), but we don't know how to know him. I will argue that these dialogues are not convincing regarding how to know God and Hume might have deliberately distanced himself from this system of thought to avoid notorious religious scrutiny. Therefore, the dialogues are not in agreement with his philosophy. The conclusion of the dialogues in part XII is in contrast with Hume's views. Hume should have dismantled both versions of religion (natural and revealing), instead of siding with the design theory as the closest version to the truth.

According to my readings of Hume, there should be an initial question in reading the dialogues if our "experience" in Humean term provides us with enough evidence to draw a rational conclusion about God. If experience does provide us with enough evidence, then the relevant beliefs (e.g. religious belief, in case of the Dialogues) are justified and are thus rational; and if experience does not provide us with enough evidence, then the relevant beliefs are not justified and irrational. Hume's commitment to

skepticism and empiricism, he could have convinced us that the dialogues were about the existence of God, but he



empiricism accounts for the narrow focus of his religious investigation in the Dialogues. Hume exclusively focuses on the design theory. There is the premise, "universe as creation of God" initially launches the dialogues. The premise is given without any evidence; rather it's a hypothesis. This could serve for inductive reasoning. There is no room for deductive reasoning in the dialogues, because each premise needs to be veritable and factually true or false. Therefore, the whole dialogues are governed by inductive reasoning, which is the only tool used in any theological debates. If we consider an argument as inductive reasoning, then we shall have some general premises (hypotheses) and will draw a relative and probable conclusion out of them. The nature of inductive reasoning is that it is never positively proven true or false. In the case of the dialogues, the inductive reasoning is engaged with the argument that should have been the conclusion (the existence of God), not the initial premise to launch the dialogues. It seems that the logical structure of the dialogues is reversed. The participants just want to find out a way to know God, since they believe they know that God exists.

The design theory argument was quite popular at this time because of Sir Isaac Newton's favoritism on this position. Hume only considers this argument among many others, such as the ontological argument (which sought to prove God's existence from his very

nature) and the cosmological argument (which claimed that God had to exist in philosophical background throughout order to account for our existence). Only the dialogues.

the design argument looks to the world

and asks, "Is there enough evidence Being a skeptic or a cautious naturalist here to justify our belief in an infinitely requires us to know about Hume's good, wise, and omnipotent God?" position against traditional and Obviously, this argument enjoys the dogmatic metaphysics. Hume rejects principle of charity (considering God is the old metaphysics and denies any a good). As I mentioned earlier, the priori knowledge. Instead, he launches existence of God is taken a priori (which his enquiry on an empirical basis. Thus, Hume has a fundamental problem he is mainly a skeptic, since empiricism with); and the dialogues only seek for naturally leads to skepticism. To Hume experimental evidence on how to know every proposition needs to be cross-God. In the design argument this world examined. The truth-value is not a serves as the effects of God's wisdom. predetermined fact.

Hume is engaging three types of 18th At the same time, Hume is a naturalist. century thinkers, each of whom is To him everything begins with nature. represented by a character in the Being a naturalist does not entail dialogues. First of all, he discusses the rejection of skepticism. He holds both sort of man who would believe in the positions valid. The origin of idea and design argument, the empirical theist sense impression describes his (Cleanthes). The empirical theist ontological naturalism, since he believes that by looking at the world, we attempts to provide a scope of can come to acknowledge both the understanding based on the knowledge existence and the nature of God. The of objects in nature. This however, second type of man that Hume convinces Hume of the skeptical discusses in the dialogues is the knowledge of nature, as well. Talking orthodox Christian or fideist (Demea), about the missing shade of blue who believes that because human predicates the uncertainty of intellectual resources are too weak to knowledge about nature derived by lead us to any certain truths about God, senses.

we should abandon reason and accept

truths on faith. Finally, Hume presents Skepticism is the matter of methods on the skeptic (Philo), who is not wholly gaining knowledge and how it would be satisfied with either of these or could be trusted. How is knowledge alternatives. But Philo agrees that God's justified? It is not just enough to have a existence is beyond doubt and he also true belief. One must also have good agrees that God's nature cannot be reasons for that belief. Skepticism is the known. In fact, Philo's stand is process of validating or not validating a

statement or a proposal. It requires being analytical, because it assesses and calculates the data for any statements. The nature of data requires verification. This leads to the factuality of data and Hume derives that from nature. Skepticism requires reasoning before accepting or rejecting any statement or any proposal. The validity of truth needs

objective view of human reasoning. It is known as Hume's fork. Hume, in 'Enquiry IV,' explains the Objects of Human Reason. They are divided in two kinds: Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact. We use these two distinct mechanisms in our enquiry about the world. There is certainty in relation of ideas, since they do not rely on

His main corpus of knowledge is based on experience. Naturalism relies on empirical investigation, because everything needs to be examined and any postulate or theory can be proven false if not based on natural properties. Empiricism and naturalism are the foundations of Hume's philosophy and in my view they are in sheer contrast



to be discovered and confirmed through reasoning, not simply accepted as a dogma or as a preconceived a priori.

Hume's stand on the concept of religion is not in agreement with his philosophy. Hume believes that all reasoning about matters of fact is founded on the relation of cause and effect and yet knowledge of the relation of cause and effect is not a priori, but arises entirely from experience. He develops an

experience; and matters of fact are contingent, because they are based on experience. Clearly, the second branch of Hume's fork (Matters of Fact) breeds his skepticism. He cannot possibly accept the existence of God as the premediated premise to launch the dialogues, and yet he does.

Hume is also a naturalist because he refutes a priori knowledge. He does not accept any unexperienced knowledge.

with the knowledge of God as a priori. Hume believes we do not understand the cause and effect relation through reason. It is a matter of constant conjunction that we expect event B to happen after event A. We observe and memorize the sequence of happenings. The uniqueness of this repeating sequence is what Hume means by constant conjunction. Thus, he devises the term "custom."

Reason can never satisfy us that the experiencing the existence of God. existence of any one object does ever imply that of another; so that when we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determin'd by reason, but by custom or a principle of association [T1.3.7.6].

There is not a priori inference about the cause and effect relation. It is a matter of experience. There is also a necessary connection between A & B. The necessity is essential in order to explain causality. The principles of association explain the necessity for connection. The ideas or objects in the causal relation are related with each other. If there is no similarity, or contiguity, there will not be any chances for the necessary connection. Hence, the knowledge about the existence of God is impossible, because of the lack of "cause and effect" relations. Therefore, there is not "custom" (in Humean term) generated and there is no experience of God.

This reasoning should be acceptable to Demea to bolster his stand to revealing religion. On the other hand, it should have helped Philo to dismiss the whole argument of God, because he cannot devise or envision any constant conjunction of memorizing and

Based on Hume's method about knowledge, one can predict that Hume cannot accept any dogma no matter how divine and sacred it may be considered. Knowing about Hume's

of God, consequently leaning towards fideism and simply accepting the premise of the existence of God a priori. Demea's stand on fideism may be justified, but Philo's is not. God is incomprehensible and yet we can know him by revelation only.

What is revelation and how one can trust it? The history of religions reveals that any established religion does have a violent past. Every religion has a socio-economic impact on the hosting society. It offers a social change; therefore the traditional forces and groups of people who already have established their status become vulnerable and threatened. Both sides wage war, one group acting defensively (defending what they have) and the other side behaving offensively (to get what they don't have).

The major three religions of Western tradition are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each one prophesizes based on a scripture. The scripture is considered as the word of God in the case of Islam and some official narratives accepted by the orthodox religious authorities in Judaism and Christianity. These canons are not for debate. This

premediated supposition establishes its position through force and suppression. This acknowledgement of God through scripture is not possible by any cognitive processes, hence there is no epistemic value attributed to God. The question still stands on Hume's recognition of




position in regard to knowledge, one should predict Hume's rejection of Demea's position in addition to the rejection of Cleanthes'. However, surprisingly Philo sides with Demea out of the inability of discovering any methods about gaining any knowledge

Philo's position on God.

The whole dialogues have been launched based on this unique premise that all three participants believe in God. This premise carries a contentious fault at its core and yet the participants are blind to it, particularly Philo.

How can a premise being recognized without any epistemic value, without any knowledge and yet accepting it as a fact, a priori by Hume? This is not possible unless it is assumed. The assumption is considered as the fact of God's existence without Humean "custom" and "cause and effect" relations and hence with no experience. The trouble is how Hume justifies this approach. He obviously, abandons his skepticism and empiricism. He abandons his system and the means of obtaining knowledge when it comes to God. In other words, he denies his own philosophy in the dialogues.

We observe, not only does Philo side with Demea, but at the conclusion of the dialogues Pamphilus, a Cleanthes' pupil,

calls Cleanthes the closest participant to the fact that Hume's philosophy the truth than the other two. This verdict however is extraordinary and certainly unexpected and unjustified. his empiricism and naturalism, there This book was crafted over 25 years and should not be any room for dogmatism was set for publication posthumously. whether considered holy or not. The Hume could not have had any dialogues begin based on the premise preservation of repercussions from that God already exists without any religious authorities after his death. To verification. All three participants agree on this. The debate is about how to say the least, Philo should not have know God. There is an epistemic error in agreed with the premise to begin with in the dialogues. The premise that God the dialogues. The existence of God as exists, and we just need to find a path to the primary quest for Philo has not been know him and the debate being about proven, yet there is the debate about which kind of justifiable path to agree how to know God. Deductive reasoning cannot be applied to these dialogues. It Hume's thinking, unless there is some would be only inductive reasoning information about Hume at his applicable to these dialogues on the deathbed of which we are not aware. principle of charity. The conclusion of This remains a mystery. the dialogues breeds fideism that unites Demea and Philo against Cleanthes. And yet unjustifiably, it is Cleanthes who is claimed as the winner of the debate. The conclusion of the dialogues, part XII, is not in agreement with Hume's philosophy. 

Conclusion

In the dialogues, it is expected of Hume to remain a critic of religion, yet he stops short in discrediting religion as the conclusion of his argument. Knowing



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Australia

Atheist Foundation of

Australia

www.atheistfoundation.org.au

Progressive Atheists

www.progressiveatheists.org

Sydney Atheists Incorporated

www.SydneyAtheists.org

Canada

Libres penseurs athées

www.lpa.atheisme.ca

www.AFT.atheisme.ca

Denmark

Ateistisk Selskab (Danish

Atheist Society)

www.ateist.dk

Germany

Internationaler Bund der

Konfessionslosen und

Atheisten

www.ibka.org

Greece

Atheist Union of Greece

www.atheia.gr

Guatemala

Asociación Guatemalteca de

Humanistas Seculares

www.humanistasguatemala.org

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Indonesia

Indonesian Atheists

www.indonesianatheists.wordpress.com

[press.com](http://www.indonesianatheists.wordpress.com)

Ireland

Atheist Ireland

www.atheist.ie

Iran

Iranian Atheists & Agnostics

www.facebook.com/Iran.Atheist.agnostic

[st.agnostic](http://www.facebook.com/Iran.Atheist.agnostic)

Iraq

Atheist Alliance of Iraq

www.facebook.com/groups/AI.IRAQ

[AI.IRAQ](http://www.facebook.com/groups/AI.IRAQ)

Israel

Hofesh – Freedom from

Religion NPO

[www.Hofesh.org.il/English/In-](http://www.Hofesh.org.il/English/Index.html)

[dex.html](http://www.Hofesh.org.il/English/Index.html)

Lebanon

Freethought Lebanon

www.freethoughtlebanon.net

Netherlands

Atheistisch Verbond (Atheist

Union)

www.atheistischverbond.nl

Norway

The Heathen Society

www.hedning.no

Pakistan

Atheists and Agnostics

Alliance of Pakistan

www.aaapakistan.org

Palestine

Palestinian Atheist-Agnostic

Movement

[www.facebook.com/pages/pal-](http://www.facebook.com/pages/palestinian-atheistagnostic-movement/68463)

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Philippines

Philippine Atheists &

Agnostics

Society Inc (PATAS)

www.patassociety.org

Philippines

HAPI - The Humanist Alliance

Philippines, International

[www.hapihumanist.org/the-](http://www.hapihumanist.org/the-hapi-founder-corner)

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Puerto Rico

Secular Humanists of Puerto

Rico

www.humanistaspr.org

South Africa

Free Society Institute

www.fsi.org.za

Suomi

Atheist Association of Finland

www.dlc.fi/~etkirja/Atheist.htm

Turkey

Ateizm Dernegi

www.ateizmdernegi.org.tr

Ateist Dergi

www.ateistdergi.com

Uganda

Humanist Association for

Leadership, Equity &

Accountability (HALEA)

www.haleauganda.org

United Kingdom

Atheism UK

www.atheismuk.com

United States of America

Atheist Alliance of America

www.atheistallianceamerica.org

Freedom From Religion

Foundation

www.ffrf.org

Secular Humanist Society of

New York

www.shsny.org