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November 2019

AAI's New Executive!



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President's Letter

Great News!



I am very pleased to be able to welcome David P Silverman to the lead role in our organisation.

Atheist Alliance International has been growing and has reached the point where we need a CEO to run things. Who better to do the job than David P. Silverman? We went through our multiple interview admission process with the result that David was elected without a single negative vote. David has a great track record of organizing campaigns, getting media attention and attracting donations for our mission. He comes to us as an atheist activist with twenty two years of combat experience at the battlefield in the USA.

As many of you know, the United States is a bit of a special case being constitutionally secular but, in practice, much more religious than the other liberal democracies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the western European nations. The USA is a big country and not homogeneous; the major cities, especially those on the East and West coasts, are more atheistic, but if you travel into the hinterland you will find the rural areas are still seriously God-fearing.

American Christians are always pushing their luck trying to get away with things like the message 'One Nation Under God' on the dollar and the Ten Commandments carved on statues in prominent locations by public institutions.

David has been walking this tightrope for years and has made some notable impacts, such as the famous interview in which Bill O'Reilly revealed he doesn't know what causes the tides! When did a presenter's ignorance become evidence for the Christian God? I must have missed that memo.

Most famously, David organized the Reason Rally held in Washington DC on 24th March 2012. Speakers and performers included biologist Richard Dawkins, physicist Lawrence M. Krauss, musician Tim Minchin, MythBusters co-host Adam Savage, actor-comedian Eddie Izzard, Paul Provenza, PZ Myers, Jessica Ahlquist, Dan Barker, and magician James Randi, among others. Comedian Bill Maher and magician Penn Jillette addressed the crowd by video link.

Participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance, deliberately omitting the phrase "under God", which was

only added by the U.S. Congress in 1954. The U.S. Armed Forces were represented, and a retired Army colonel, Kirk Lamb, led veterans in an affirmation of secular military oaths.

Speakers urged the crowd to contact local and national representatives and ask them to support church-state separation, science education, marriage equality for gays and lesbians and ending government support of faith-based organizations, among other causes.

According to the official website of the Reason Rally the aim was to "*Unify, energize and embolden secular people nationwide, while dispelling the negative opinions held by so much of American society.*" The documentary movie *The Unbelievers* says that over 30,000 people attended the rally.

David, your energy, enthusiasm and experience are a very welcome addition to our organization.

Gail Miller
President, Atheist
Alliance
International



president@atheistalliance.org

Editorial: Get 'em young!



The Jesuits had a saying,

"Give me a boy of seven and I'll show you the man."

The Catholic Jesuit sect knew the importance of capturing innocence. Anyone who has been a parent will agree that, up until about eight years old, a child usually accepts the guidance of adults.

After that age, young people gradually become increasingly disaffected until, by mid teenage, they consider the older generation to be very uncool. I spent much of my life teaching secondary school kids and the staff members with timetables that had fewest obstreperous year nine classes were always envied for having a less stressful workload.

Of course, we all grow out of childish behavior, which reminds me of how my first father-in-law, a painter and decorator, used to tell about a young apprentice who began work thinking he knew best but, after a few years, he was amazed to discover how much his mentor had learned in the intervening time! It was the other way round, of course, but pride

prevented him from admitting that!

This wisdom about the changing psychology of growing humans has been taken advantage of by churches for centuries. They worked out long ago that there's two ways of growing a flock:

A. persuade grown ups to be subservient to their control or
B. indoctrinate children while they are still vulnerable to fairy tales (and outlaw contraception).

'A' is the difficult option and often requires a lot of threats and killing, while 'B' is a much easier and less brutal proposition. The 'Born Again Movement' hopes to turn 'A's back into 'B's!

Realizing this centuries ago, Christian clerics set up schools with curricula that focussed on their own doctrines. Elsewhere on the planet Muslim clerics set up madrassas where reciting the Qur'an is the only lesson taught. The outcome was a literate class who had been indoctrinated into specific belief systems. Having exclusive control of schooling meant that even the first non-believers had to start by rejecting their childhood training.

This has left humanity with a legacy: the very languages of our

societies are peppered by religious references. English speakers utter expressions like 'Bless you', 'God knows' and 'Heavens above' without even registering that they are using faith based vocabulary. It's the same in Jewish and Islamic circles.

For a while in the twentieth century it looked as though the grip of Christianity on the minds of Europeans was being loosened. Then the age of cheap jet travel began and the world was shook up; people were no longer imprisoned in the land of their birth. Unfortunately, many of them took their beliefs with them when they migrated...

Here in the UK, we now have such a situation of religious resurgence that there is a growing number of faith schools. Even BBC presenter Dr Alice Roberts (pictured with me above), who fronts the campaign against the state funding of faith schools, had no choice but to send her own children to a state sponsored Church of England school!

John Richards
AAI Publications
Director



The day I lied for my mom



My universe sat in front of me. All my relatives, family friends, kids from school, everyone I knew and cared about sat there, staring, smiling, and waiting for me to speak. It was time for my Bar Mitzvah – It was time for me to lie.

“Let us declare the greatness of our God and render honor unto the Torah which God gave through Moses as a heritage of the congregation of Israel. blah, blah.”

There I stood, an atheist from Jewish parents, saying words I didn't mean about a god in which I did not believe, to everyone in my Universe. I was under orders by my mother to give a perfect performance, and I did. My mom knew I didn't believe in god – I was never good at keeping quiet about my doubts – and on that fateful day she made me lie to everyone I knew and cared about. Say the words, because that's what good Jewish boys do.

I have always been a good public speaker and, without giving much thought to the hypocrisy of it all, I gave a great performance that day. I forgot nothing, enunciated carefully and made eye contact with individual audience members as I recited the lies I was forced to tell.

When I was done, everyone told me how wonderful I was, and what a good Jew I was, and how proud my parents must be. They gave me money and presents and we had a party with a band, a chocolate

fountain for the kids and an open bar for everyone else. We fervently celebrated my lie together. Everyone was happy with me – except me.

My mom used to call me “sensitive” because I cared about people, animals and a little thing called truth. What bothered me most was not the fact that I'd lied, but the fact that I'd been believed. Everyone believed I meant what I'd said, they all thought I was a good Jewish boy – they thought I was different from what I really was – an atheist being forced to say words.

At first, this upset me quite a bit, until I realized I was assuming all those people had also told me the truth. What if they were lying too? What if Uncle Harvey called me a “good Jew” because he *knew he had to say that*? What if my Nana told me she was proud because she felt obliged to do so? Moreover, what if the rabbi was just saying the words because it was his job, not because he believed in an invisible man in the sky? What if other people had succumbed to the same pressure under which I'd caved, and were in fact atheists like me?

I thought back to Passover the year before. Uncle Harvey wore a napkin on his head – yes, a napkin on his head – instead of a yarmulke to say the prayers when he led the Seder, eliciting laughter from the whole family instead of disdain; did anyone take this seriously?

Indeed, in the days following my Bar Mitzvah I thought about many people who observed their religion in an obviously half-hearted manner, and I realized that there was no way I'd been the only liar in that Temple – the real question was whether I was the only one who knew it. The more I thought about other people and how they behaved toward their religion, the more I realized that it was possible that the room was chock-filled with people who were going through the motions because they felt forced to do so. God began to take the shape of a naked emperor, and my universe was cheering his clothing.

I forever look at my Bar Mitzvah as the day I told my first big lie, but realized that the bigger lie was that we *all* had to say that we believed, congratulate those who proclaimed their faith and never call out the emperor for being naked. The Big Lie of religion is that we need to pretend to believe, even if we don't.

Now, I can tell the truth and the truth is quite simple: all religions are lies, and all believers are victims who need and deserve our help.

David P Silverman
Executive Director



I Lost my faith in Chick-fil-A

Reposted from
The Christian Post



I was 23, working for a conservative state legislative campaign in central Texas in the summer of 2016. I'd been visiting churches, synagogues, Humanist meetings and philosophical discussion groups of all types just to compare them in the search for truth. I had a copy of Spinoza's book about comparative theology in my hand, continuing my faith journey over waffle fries in this iconic institution of evangelical culture.

True to form, the restaurant was playing instrumental-only worship music, providing just enough subtlety for a nonbeliever not to be offended by songs they didn't recognize, while a believer would know all the words. And so the songs played, and my head filled in the lyrics of my favorite familiar worship songs. My mind left the book I was reading, pulled toward the vivid flashbacks of every fundamentalist sermon, every apologetic talking point, every one of the thousands of King James Bible verses I had memorized. In a flood of what I can only describe as turmoil, realized that I had long since read all the philosophy and theology that I needed to make my decision.

I dropped my book, went into the men's room, sat on the toilet and bawled my eyes out for an hour and a half. It was over. I was an atheist, having been drug kicking and screaming by the evidence against every desire, incentive and goal that I had set out with. It was all for nothing but to learn that my curiosity would not sleep until my desire to be an effective apologist left me with nothing to defend.

I had wanted nothing more than to reinforce my faith, but willing myself to believe something that just didn't make sense was no longer sustainable. So adrift on a sea of chaos, I called my then-fiance who was doing missions work in Asia at the time, and begged her not to leave me as her faith insisted she would have to. I lost an incredible number of relationships, either by their choice or mine.

I lost my career in the politics of the religious right and took some time to reestablish myself as a progressive activist instead. I expected my entire family to disown me, which they actually didn't. What many of them did instead was to become so controlling and

condescending that I ended up being the one to cut them off.

Other relationships changed as a result, arguably for the better. I think I've come to realize that many relationships are conditional. A friendship with Jesus, for example, is conditional on obedience (John 15:14). A relationship with a person that has shared faith at its foundation might be conditional or it might not.

When you remove the faith element, you discover whether that person loved you for you or simply loved you for fitting a particular mold. It was agony to find out who was who. The whole thing was without a doubt the worst thing I've ever been through at the time, but in hindsight, the best thing that ever happened to me.

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The Editor of Christian Post says this:

*We decided to post testimonies from people who are no longer Christians because we wanted to hear their stories and try to understand why they chose to abandon their faith. Our hope is that the Church will listen.*

What do you think?

JR



We have some new products!  
Just in time for the giving season  
<https://www.zazzle.com/s/atheist+alliance>

## FEEL THE SPIN

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**Feel the Spin**  
a novel  
by Marshall Moskow



# Falun Gong Exposed



In a recent article published in Skeptic Magazine I laid out what I had learned about Falun Gong and the Shen Yun Orchestra, including how the cult was the brainchild of a single charismatic leader, how the people in the cult live on a secluded compound and, most importantly, how they use white guilt and anti-Chinese mentality to raise money for their cult under the disingenuous disguise of victimhood. But Falun Gong is more than just a religious cult that hides behind persecution so that nobody criticizes its craziness: it's a blatantly racist organization which proudly engages in hate speech, using the money spent by well-meaning concertgoers (like me) to promote a bigoted backward ideology to the world at large.

When I investigated the cult, I didn't go looking for bigotry - it jumped out at me. I went looking for the standard cult stuff: the crazy leader, the supernatural claims, the Children-of-the-Corn cult members following blindly. Yes, I found all that but I was surprised to learn that the crazy teachings of Master Li, the founder and cult leader, included directives and practices that are repugnant and frankly have no place in today's diverse and civilized Western society.

This information came when I was interviewing some former members of the Shen Yun Orchestra, one of whom was an African American man who lived on the compound for months until the racism drove him away. "Aaron", who like all the others interviewed, insisted on anonymity out of fear of repercussion, described his experience with Master Li while living on the compound. "It was something I'd never experienced before. It felt cultish, like a David Koresh thing," Aaron explained, before surprising me with the racism! "Master Li teaches that anybody with dark skin is an abomination to society... like an ape... His example is if you have a piece of paper and ink spills on it, then the paper is stained."

Master Li went on to say, "When you add darkness or stain to anything pure, that is the wickedness. When you add darkness to society, you add wickedness to society." Aaron noted that racism was not only preached, but *practiced* by the cult, saying, "I was the only black person in the orchestra. On stage and in the videos, there was never anyone of dark hue in anything".

"When you say anyone born from an interracial marriage is an

abomination or that anything that corrupts the whiteness is unholy, it's racist no matter what the terminology or excuse." He continued, "When I heard all that I was like, yup, there's my exit."

After I heard this, I started looking for the bigotry in Falun Gong, and was astonished by the avalanche of abhorrent rhetoric spewed out by the organization and its founder without hesitation, without shame.

In speeches posted online at [falubdafa.org](http://falubdafa.org) for all to see, Li's teachings are unmistakably racist, and unashamedly ignorant.

"The races in the world are not allowed to be mixed up. Now, the races are mixed up, and it has brought about an extraordinarily serious problem. Once races are mixed up, one does not have a corresponding relationship with the higher levels, and he has lost the root. Mixed races have lost their roots, as if nobody in the paradise will take care of them. They belong to nowhere, and no places would accept them."

But wait, it gets better: *the aliens are racists too!* In a Speech in Switzerland Li revealed how the aliens are using mixed-race people to take over the world! I'm not kidding. "The way alien beings get human beings to shake free of the gods is to

(continued on page 8)

(continued from page 7)

mix the races, causing human beings to become rootless people, just like the plant hybrids people make nowadays. South Americans, Central Americans, Mexicans and some people in South East Asia – all of these races have been mixed. None of this can evade the gods' eyes. Alien beings have made rather extensive preparations for overtaking human beings."

So interracial marriage is not just wicked and polluted, its also - literally - the tool of aliens coming to invade us! Mixed-race people are apparently an active threat to world security. And because depressing, ignorant bigotry doesn't stop at just demonizing one minority, I found plenty of homophobic teachings in Falun Gong as well.

"Question: Why is it that homosexuals are considered bad people?"

Li: "Let me tell you, if I weren't teaching this Fa today, gods' first target of annihilation would be homosexuals. It's not me who would destroy them, but gods. You know that homosexuals have found legitimacy in that homosexuality was around back in the culture of ancient Greece. Yes, there was a

similar phenomenon in Ancient Greek culture. And do you know why Ancient Greek culture is no more? Why are the Ancient Greeks gone? Because they had degenerated to that extent, and so they were destroyed."

Corroborating that homophobia comes part and parcel with the racism in Falun Gong, anti-Falun Gong activist Samuel Lo wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle,

"The Falun Gong is also extremely homophobic. Li teaches that homosexuality is not the standard of being human. The priority of gods will be to eliminate homosexuals and that gays are demonic in nature. These teachings are honored by all Falun Gong practitioners. Recently, when I confronted my mother with these teachings she said that the elimination of gays is already happening. When I wanted her to give specific examples she said that all the natural disasters that happened recently are directed at corrupt people, gays included."

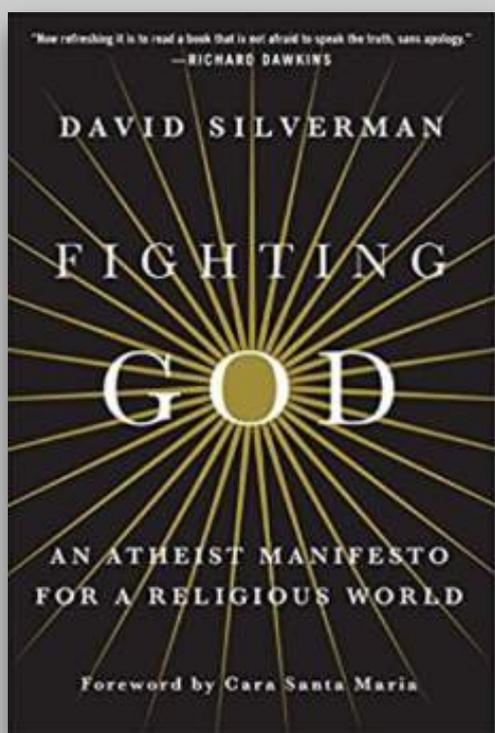
It's one thing when you're digging around on a subject and find a tidbit of information that looks bigoted; it's something altogether

different when you aren't looking for bigotry at all yet the information gushes out at you, as if a dam of hate burst in front of you. It's something larger still when you realize that racism and homophobia akin to - or worse than - the KKK is being patronized by well-meaning people who think it's all about art and Chinese culture. Nationwide, tens of thousands of American people throw money at this cult to keep it alive, unaware of the racism or the homophobia (let alone the aliens).

Bigotry is always stupid, its always ugly, and its always wrong. It's not OK if you cloak it in religion, or culture, or cult. There are multiple organizations that provide opportunities to see the wonders and beauty of Chinese culture and dance.

Maybe we should patronize one that doesn't fund a racist, homophobic, alien cult...

AAI  
Executive Director  
**David P Silverman**



Fighting God is a firebrand manifesto from one of the most recognizable faces of atheism.

In his book, Silverman, a walking, talking atheist billboard known for his appearances on Fox News, discusses the effectiveness, ethics and impact of the in-your-face-atheist who refuses to be silent. Silverman argues that religion is more than just wrong: it is malevolent and does not deserve our respect. It is our duty to be outspoken and do what we can to bring religion down. Examining the mentality, methods and issues facing the firebrand atheist, Silverman presents an overwhelming argument for firebrand atheism and reveals: - All religion is cafeteria religion and almost all agnostics are atheists.- American society grants religion a privileged status, despite the intentions of the Founding Fathers.- Christian politicians have adversely (and un-Constitutionally) affected our society with regard to science, health, women's rights and gay rights.- The notion of atheist Jews is a lie forced on us by religion.- It is not Islamophobia to observe dangerous teachings and disproportionate violence in Islam.- Atheists are slowly but surely winning the battle.

Fighting God is a provocative, unapologetic book that takes religion to task and will give inspiration to non-believers and serve as the ultimate answer to apologists.

Buy it here: <https://amzn.to/33TobGi>

# Poetry Page

## Amen



If love is a religion,  
And you're the God  
I'd probably be an atheist

If the things you say  
Are holy gospels  
I'd probably burn them to hell

You're on my mind again  
Attending your company  
Like mass on sundays

But I'd rather be at home  
Rather than to worship  
Your hypocriteness

The things you do  
Doesn't match the things you say  
You've made oaths, vows, promises

But that's at least what I think  
You broke every single one of them  
And it's \*\*\*\*\* up, it's \*\*\*\*\* me up;

You split my heart  
Like how Moses split a river  
Crossing it quietly

But when you crossed  
You left an unholy mark  
Making it bleed, making me hurt

I have no idea what I did to you  
But next time I see you,  
No more, I wont,

I wont worship you no more.

by Terri

Poetry Page

sub-editor

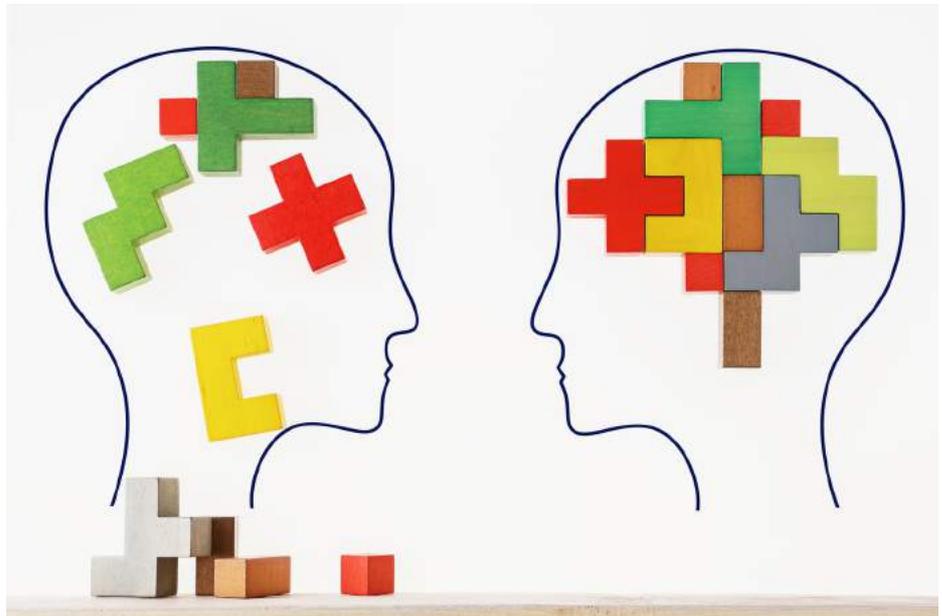
Conrad Didiodato



# Applying Logic to the God Proposition

*Eighth in the series:*

## **Argument from the Meaning of Life**



*"It would be better if I had a million dollars; therefore I have a million dollars"* is not even a logically valid argument to start with. So the only way to get from *"life must have some meaning"* to *"therefore God exists"* is with two hypotheses: that life *does* have some meaning; and that only a god could provide it.

But there is no evidence that the second hypothesis is true—we readily and easily assign meaning to things all the time by ourselves, with no help from anyone. And if you define "meaning" as "cosmic external meaning", and not "what we as individuals value about our lives and the lives of others" in an attempt to get that second hypothesis to be true, there is then no evidence the *first* hypothesis is true. Either way, you can't get to the conclusion.

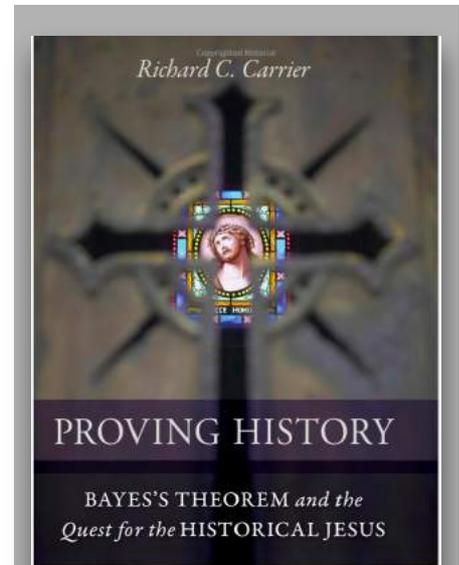
All the evidence of history and science weighs heavily for the conclusion that we are mortal, and that we actually value our lives *because of that*, and not because we are immortal—which would actually render this life cheap as dirt (since death would cost us nothing, and life is better and vastly longer on the other side of it).

Life would still be valuable if we were immortal, but not because we were immortal. It only has value because it can be lived. Which even a mortal can do.

In fact, the Prior Odds and all Bayes Factors render only one conclusion probable for those who want to live forever: only future human-made technology is likely to get you that outcome. In the meantime, life only has meaning because you value it, and because of the things you value about it. It's meaning comes from you. That being so does not increase the probability of a god one whit.

To the contrary, *that we are mortal* and throughout history have always invented our own meaning for life, and always different people have valued different things about it, is exactly what we expect if there is no god. Whereas, excuses aside, it's not all all what we expect if there is a god.

**Dr. Richard Carrier**  
*Ancient Historian*



This in-depth discussion of New Testament scholarship and the challenges of history as a whole proposes Bayes's Theorem, which deals with probabilities under conditions of uncertainty, as a solution to the problem of establishing reliable historical criteria. The author demonstrates that valid historical methods—not only in the study of Christian origins but in any historical study—can be described by, and reduced to, the logic of Bayes's Theorem.

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**The idea that the 'afterlife' provides the infinite value of eternal bliss renders actual life meaningless in comparison...**

# Is Humanism Entirely Negative?

(from [Stephen Law's blog](#) 07 01 2014)

Number three in a series of three articles explaining the difference between atheism and humanism

It is sometimes said that Humanists are not “for” anything; that Humanism is defined entirely in terms of what it rejects. It should be clear why this particular charge does not stick, given how Humanism is characterized in previous editions.

It is true that atheism is defined in a negative fashion, in terms of a non-acceptance or denial of a belief. However, Humanism involves more than just atheism. All Humanists are atheists, but not all atheists are Humanists. Stalin and Mao were atheists, but were not Humanists. That is because Stalin and Mao failed to sign up to certain key Humanist views on secularism, freedom and moral autonomy.

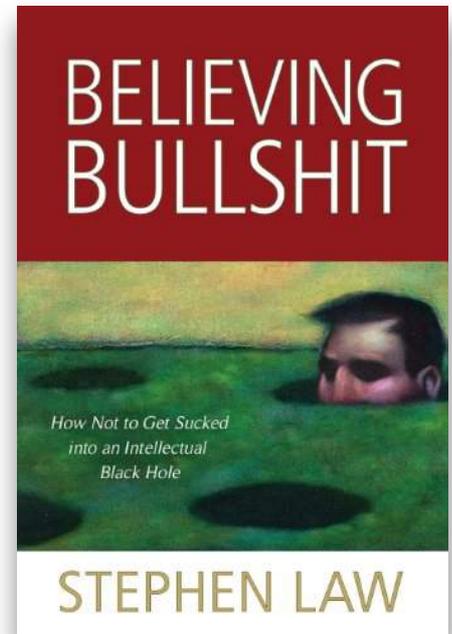
Indeed, atheists like Stalin and Mao would persecute those who qualify as Humanists in the above sense. They were very much opposed to free thought on moral, religious and other important questions. Humanists, by contrast, are for freedom of thought and expression. They are for an open, democratic society. They are also for encouraging and helping children to think critically and independently on moral, religious, political and other big questions. Humanists do not just reject approaches to answering such questions based on religious scripture and dogma, they are also for positive alternatives to

such approaches, including (as far as is possible) the application of science and reason.

What of another charge also sometimes levelled at Humanism – that it is merely an arbitrary collection of disparate ideas rather than a coherent world-view? Humanism, like religion, focuses on certain “big questions” of the sort that have been of concern to humanity since before the dawn of civilization - questions about how we should live, how society should be organized, about what is right and wrong, about what is of ultimate importance, and so on.

Religions too have focused on such questions, but they are not the exclusive preserve of religion. There is a long tradition of non-religious philosophical thought on such questions running back to antiquity. It is on this non-religious intellectual tradition that Humanism draws.

What pulls together the seven threads outlined previously into something like a system of thought is their shared focus on “big questions”, a degree of interconnection (for example, scepticism about gods will lead to scepticism about the suggestion that our moral sense derives from a god), and the pivotal role played by the first thread – Humanists try to answer these questions through the



application of science and reason, rather than relying on revelation, scripture, etc.

Rightly or wrongly, Humanists believe that Humanism is the most reasonable world-view to adopt. They would (or should) discourage acceptance of Humanism as some sort of dogma.

Stephen Law  
Reader in Philosophy  
Heythrop College  
London University



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So how does Humanism differ from 'atheism' then? In a sense, we are falling into a theistic trap by using the word 'atheist'. It's the only word in the dictionary that attempts to group together all those who have an absence in common! It's a nonsense idea. Do we need a word 'asausagist' for all of us who lack sausages? Do we gather in groups of those who have no dog?

Why does the word 'atheist' exist then? My opinion is that it has been coined expressly to denigrate non-believers. Other words that have served this purpose over the centuries include 'heathen', 'gentile' and 'infidel'.

AAI members try to turn the tables and wear the label with pride.

JR

A Profile of: Our Latest Affiliate, Atheism UK



I was at home off sick with the flu, when I happened to catch "Root of all Evil?" on Channel Four where some Oxford University biology professor went around the world exposing the silliness and perniciousness of religion. Then the same biology professor released a book. A small tome called "The God Delusion", you may have heard of it...

I wanted to be an atheist activist, I wanted the deal with the root of the problem. I wanted to campaign against religious faith and its propagation. I went to several local humanist groups who were affiliated to the BHA, and I have to say I was disappointed with what I found. Anyone using the "A" word was criticised, religion was not to be criticised in itself and all they wanted was "a place at the table". Religious privilege was to be challenged but not religious faith itself, which was considered distasteful or impolite! When the president stated that he was not interested in atheism then I knew there was something missing.

I was also a member of a London based Atheist Meetup Group who discussed this very issue and a few of the members expressed their own disappointment of the lack of co-ordinated, specifically atheist activism in the UK. So in the best traditions of such groups several of

us met up in a Soho pub and decided to found a national organisation whose raison d'être was to "advance atheism" and to "challenge religious faith." We particularly wanted to affiliate with the AAI because at the time the UK had no affiliated organisation.

Since our formation we have campaigned on a wide variety of issues including "Don't Believe it? Don't Tick it!" encouraging people who don't believe to tick the no-religion box on equal opportunities survey forms instead of the ubiquitous answers of "Christian" or "CofE", which many people put because "that's what you put!" I have heard people criticise others for not ticking "CofE" when they are actually atheists simply because they were baptised when babies and therefore think "CofE" is the default!

We have surveyed all of our Members of Parliament asking for their religious identification because we do not think that religious belief is necessary a private matter as is often said; beliefs inform actions and actions have effects and, if your job is an elected representative making laws, then we need to know what your beliefs are to inform our own voting decisions. The good news is we have several atheists in Parliament (although not enough)!

We have also set up our flagship campaign to reform religious education in UK schools as it is still used as a tool to propagate religious faith. Religious education is still a compulsory subject and is often not taught from an academic, comparative anthropological standpoint. We have developed policies and have contributed to government consultations on religious education and have called for the elimination of the word "spiritual" from government legislation.

We have done much in the last few years, but there is also much to do and we are developing other campaigns to deal with real issues that affect people's lives in the UK. People are harmed by religious faith (some even killed) and someone needs to be there to challenge those harms, the beliefs that cause them and the people that propagate them. The need for Atheism UK is growing as immigrants bring their faith with them and plant mosques and evangelical churches (see pic above). That's why we will continue to advance atheism and challenge religious faith!

Richard Honess
@atheismuk
www.atheismuk.com



Islam in Turkey today...



The Turkish population is perceived as being mostly Muslim. However, only some of the people fulfill the duties that are commanded by Islam. Yes, Muslims in Turkey are becoming less religious; more and more Turks are turning to atheism.

It is assumed that this could very well have to do with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly theocratic politics. Today, people have more courage to openly say they are atheists. Counter pressure is being exerted in the mosques. The most visible sign of this is that in 2019, schoolchildren are still obliged to study religion; Sunni Islam to be specific. This is being practiced even though there has been multiple court rulings against the policy.

Erdogan's desire to brainwash and produce a generation of devout Muslims has backfired in many ways. Religious sects and communities have discredited themselves with various child molestation cases with hundreds of victims in total over recent years. We have always said that the state should not be ruled by religious communities, as this leads to people questioning their faith and becoming humanist and/or atheists.

According to a new research conducted by Konda, people in Turkey appear to be becoming less religious, despite the 17 year rule of the conservative Pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party AKP. The research also indicates that a growing number of Turks identify themselves as atheists. Konda reports that the number of nonbelievers tripled in the past 10 years. It also found that the ratio of Turks who say they adhere to Islam dropped from 55 to 51 percent. The ratio of those who see themselves as extremely religious fell by nearly a quarter, from 13 percent to 10 percent. Turks are worshipping less, and those who fast for Ramadan fell from 77 percent to 65 percent, the study found. "While Turkey remains religious, atheists have become more visible" Konda said.

Looking at the policies of the decision-makers in Turkey, one would think that what they call 'true Islam' is not reflected in any of these actions. Islam has been politicized and the innocence of Islam has been taken away. This has caused a reaction among Turks and thus they became more hesitant about religion itself. Diyanet, Turkey's official directorate of religious affairs, declared that more than 99 percent

of the population identifies as Muslim in 2014. Konda's recent survey with evidence to the contrary caused public debate. We have been publishing various articles about this 99 percent controversy as well. The research reveals that atheists alone are at least around 3%.

The theologian Cemil Kilic believes that both figures are correct. Although 99% of Turks are Muslims, he stated, many only practice their faith in a cultural and sociological sense. They are more into the cultural side of Islam, rather than its spiritual side. On January 6, Cemil Kiliç who is a writer and teacher at the Rami Atatürk Anatolian High School in Istanbul, was interviewed by Deutsche Welle after the poll by the Konda research firm revealed a rise in the number of Turks who identified as atheists from 1 percent to 3 percent. Kiliç went on to say that Turkey's atheists and deists tended to act more morally and conscientiously than the country's self-professed Muslims.

Days after the interview was published, columnist Faruk Arslan targeted the theologian in an article for the fundamentalist Islamist newspaper Yeni Akit under the headline, "Why is a religious education teacher who is an enemy

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of religion being protected?" The January 14 piece laid out a series of Kiliç's controversial moments, including social media posts and statements quoted in a previous piece published by Yeni Akit. The contentious statements included a declaration that it is the state of being extremely drunk, not simply drinking alcohol, that is forbidden according to Islam. He linked Turkey's religious Imam Hatip high-schools to membership of the extremist jihadist Islamic State.

Kiliç's controversial social media posts included one in which he wondered how such a disparate group, including heterodox religious communities, leaders and members of an Islamist cult, and the Queen of England could all have expressed support for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Another was interpreted by Arslan as an implied threat that Erdoğan could share the fate of the deposed last sultan of the Ottoman Empire. A few days later, Kiliç informed his 121,000 followers on Twitter that he had been dismissed from his teaching role, adding in a later tweet a call for support at his planned protest against the decision.

An investigation has also been launched against the theologian for allegedly insulting the president, a crime in Turkey punishable by up to four years in prison. "I have been preparing myself psychologically for such a decision for some time" Kiliç told Deutsche Welle, "I was trained to be a teacher. I'm very sad about the decision. I'm being separated from the students and profession I love." he added.

For Kiliç, the decision was driven by his firmly secular approach to his profession. "They saw my ideas as political activity" he said. In Turkey, Kiliç said, the relationship between organized religion and the state endures. "Regular prayers have become a way to signal obedience toward the political leadership" he said. "And prayers in mosques

increasingly reflect the political worldview of those in power." Kiliç said a lack of belief did not, of course, mean the lack of a moral compass. "Some atheists are more ethical and conscientious than many Muslims" he said. Islam is usually used as a means to justify the policies of Erdoğan and his ruling party for the past 17 years.

Once he was discriminated for praising atheists in his own way, Association of Atheism reached out to offer Cemil Kiliç legal help in the court of law. He thanked us for the offer and said he was feeling emotional, being offered help from Atheists, as he is a Muslim. He also tweeted about our legal help to him and that tweet has become viral.

In conclusion, as history repeats itself in all religiously suppressed nations, Turkish society is resisting and becoming less and less religious. Some studies relate it to the age of information, some to other sociological or socio-economical reasons. Yes, it

may seem like the mandatory religious education courses that promote Sunni Islam, the spreading of Islamic Imam Schools and hundreds of other practices and policies are brainwashing the Turkish youth which may look promising for the ruling party and seem like the Pro-Islamics will rule for decades to come.

Having said that, sooner or later, critical thinking skills of the brainwashed youth will develop and they will be more skeptic day after day from witnessing all the corruption that has been done in the name of Islam and Allah for the past 17 years of Pro-Islamic rule. It's just a matter of how hard we will keep resisting.

Turkish Correspondent
Onur Romano



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Eugenie Scott

**Former Executive Director of National
Centre for Science Education**



Eugenie was brought up in Christian Science by her mother and grandmother but later switched to a congregational church under the influence of her sister. She is now a secular humanist and describes herself as a nontheist. She grew up in Wisconsin and first became interested in anthropology after reading her sister's textbook.

Having obtained a PhD from the University of Missouri, she joined the University of Kentucky as a physical anthropologist in 1974, and shortly thereafter attended a debate between her mentor James A. Gavan and the young Earth creationist Duane Gish, which piqued her interest in the creation-evolution controversy.

In 1980, Scott worked to prevent creationism from being taught in the public schools of Lexington, Kentucky. She was appointed the executive director of the National Center for Science Education in 1987, the year in which requiring the teaching of creation science in American public schools was deemed illegal by the Supreme Court in *Edwards v. Aguillard*.

In 2003, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that, "Scott describes herself as atheist but does not discount the importance of spirituality."

Eugenie is an expert on creationism and intelligent design. Her book *Evolution vs Creationism: An Introduction* was published by Greenwood Press in 2004. Niles Eldredge wrote the foreword in the first edition. A second edition of the book was published in 2008 and in paperback in 2009. The foreword to this edition was written by John Jones III, who was the presiding judge in the *Kitzmiller vs Dover* case.

She co-edited with Glenn Branch the 2006 anthology *Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design is Wrong for Our Schools*. Also in 2006 Jon D. Miller, Scott and Shinji Okamoto had a brief article published in *Science* entitled 'Public Acceptance of Evolution: an analysis of polling, from the last 20 years, on the acceptance of evolution in the United States compared to other countries'. Turkey had the lowest acceptance of evolution in the survey, with the United States having the next-lowest, though the authors saw a positive in the higher percentage of Americans who are unsure about evolution and therefore "reachable" for evolution.

David Berlinski, a fellow at the Christian propagandist Discovery Institute, describes Scott as an opponent "who is often sent out to defend Darwin". Scott prefers to see

herself as "Darwin's golden retriever".

She has been profiled in *The New York Times* and has taken part in numerous debates on MSNBC and Fox News. In 2004, Scott represented the National Center for Science Education on the Showtime television show *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!* in the episode titled "Creationism", where she offered philosophical views about the creationist and intelligent design movements.

In 2005, Scott served as an education and scientific consultant for the plaintiffs in the *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* case regarding the teaching of intelligent design in public schools. Judge John Jones ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. Scott said, "we won decisively" and "we had the better case."

About the merits of the case, she said, "Within evolutionary biology, we argue about the details... and the mechanisms", but "we don't argue about whether living things descended with modification from common ancestors, which is what biological evolution is all about".

Abridged from Wikipedia



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