

The Six C's of Atheism

By August Berkshire

People who know me might describe me as a flaming liberal. Yet in one area I am a conservative. I am an atheist.

Conservative

Yes, atheism is a conservative position. We accept statements only so far as there is reason and/or evidence to back them up. Anything else is speculation. We make no leaps of faith. If there should some day be a compelling reason or piece of evidence for a god, then we would acknowledge it and change our views. This is also known as intellectual honesty.

Clarity

An atheist possesses clarity in his or her thinking processes. We are able to identify those things for which we have evidence and separate them from other things that are merely wishful thinking.

Consistent

An atheist is also consistent. We apply our skepticism equally to all supernatural claims. We do not say, "All prophets, saviors, or gods are false – except ours." We make no exceptions or special pleadings.

Contradiction-free

Another benefit of atheism is that it is contradiction-free. We don't have to try to reconcile an all-loving, all-seeing, all-powerful god with the existence of evil. We don't have to define love exactly the opposite of how we normally define it in order to make it applicable to a god. We don't have to claim that a poor supernatural designer is intelligent.

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Courage

Finally, an atheist possesses courage. It is natural for people to have a healthy survival instinct. However, some people have such a fear of death that they feel compelled to believe in an afterlife to alleviate those fears. It takes intellectual and emotional courage to abandon belief in an afterlife because there is no evidence for it (and compelling evidence against it). It also takes intellectual and emotional courage to abandon one's belief in a cosmic, supernatural "protector" and realize that, as far as we know, we are alone in our universe and must therefore help each other as best we can.

Conclusion

One of the arguments of Pascal's Wager is that a person loses nothing by believing in a god. I beg to differ. Accepting Pascal's Wager means saying that we are willing to abandon reason and evidence as our guides to living, and instead make a leap of faith to... where?

It's true that by converting (or deconverting) from theism to atheism a person will lose his or her sense of divine specialness, cosmic meaning in life, and any hope of an afterlife. But you can't lose what you never really had.

The reality of atheism far outweighs the dream of religion. There is an excitement and beauty to perceiving the world as it really is, and not as an illusion.

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AugustBerkshire.com

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