



[Recently, I showed](#) that if God does not exist then life has no meaning, it has no purpose and there is no value. “But, Dave,” you may say. “I know *plenty* of atheists. And they live purposeful lives full of meaning.” That’s probably true. As we will see, though, people rarely consider the ramifications of atheism and they almost never live it out consistently.

If atheism is true, and God does not exist, then we are left with nihilism – that life is meaningless, has no purpose and has no value. But, most people have never considered this. And they certainly don’t live this way.

Atheism: Inconsistent or Unhappy Living

Seeing as how, [under atheism, life is absurd](#), atheists are unable to live a life that is both consistent and happy with their worldview. If they chose to live consistently with atheism (life has no meaning, no purpose, and no value) then this realization would lead to an unhappy life. And, if you are living a happy life – one with meaning and purpose and value – you are living inconsistently with the world view.

The noted philosopher and atheist Bertrand Russell admitted as much in his book [Free Man’s Worship](#), where he writes:

Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.

Bertrand Russell, [Free Man’s Worship](#)

Basically, Russell is proposing that we ought to just come to grips with the fact that life is absurd – everything we have done or accomplished is pointless because the universe will end in heat death. And the sooner we realize how pointless everything is the sooner we can be happy. So, even though Russell saw that everything he did had no ultimate purpose, meaning or value, he proposes that we *should* live as if it does!. He spent his life in very purposeful ways; protesting against war (he went to jail for it once) and winning the Nobel Prize in literature for his works that promoted humanitarianism. In other words, he felt that life had no ultimate value but it was worth something all at the same time.

Let’s have a look at the three areas of life again and see how hard it is to live a life both consistently and happily under atheism.



Meaning

Previously, we showed that life without God has no meaning. Yet, people continue to live lives as though they *do* have meaning. Existential philosophers like [Jean-Paul Sartre](#) would tell us that we can create our own meaning of life, the universe, and everything. But, if I give the universe meaning, this doesn't make the meaning objectively true (true no matter what); it's a *subjective* meaning. If I didn't exist, then this meaning of the universe wouldn't exist either. And, what happens if I come up with a meaning for the universe and someone else comes up with a *different* meaning? What if I think the meaning of life is to make as much money as possible no matter what the cost? This is in direct opposition to people who think it is wrong to hoard wealth and should distribute it more fairly. These two points are in direct opposition. They can't both be right.

So, if we live a life of meaning without an outside, objective Meaning Giver, we are only pretending that meaning exists. If atheism is true, and we all live happy lives full of meaning, then we are living inconsistently with that world view and only *pretending* that what we do matters.

Value

When we come to the issue of value, we will see where the most obvious inconsistencies show up. The vast majority of atheistic humanists (the belief that humanity has the ability to determine what is best for itself with no need for supernatural interference) promote things like love and community and friendship. All of these are good values to have. But, if life has no ultimate value (like Russell proposed) then living a life with love and community and friendship is only *pretending* it has value. Russell lived his life in this inconsistent way as well; he both held that life had no value and lived his life as if it did. His protests against war were because he thought the lives of others *did* have value.

William Lane Craig sums up this fact in his book *On Guard*:

The point is that if there is no God, then objective right and wrong do not exist. As Dostoyevsky said, "All things are permitted." But man cannot live this way. So he makes a leap of faith and affirms values anyway. And when he does so, he reveals the inadequacy of a world without God.

On Guard, William Lane Craig

As an illustration, imagine a doctor in search of a cure for cancer. He decides that the best



way to stop cancer is to keep it from growing once it begins to form. Keeping cancer from growing could save millions of lives because it is easy to perform surgery to remove a small spot as opposed to dealing with it once it has spread to several organs.

Let's say he has taken the laboratory tests as far as he can in the test tubes and Petri dishes - as well as with other living specimens like rats and mice and his progress has stalled. The only other way he can finalize his research is through human testing. But, nobody wants to volunteer to get cancer on purpose. So, in his regular family medicine practice, he begins injecting his patients with cancer so he can study it as it attaches and grows. As a family practitioner, he has access to a very diverse sample size - all age ranges, genders, races, and preexisting medical conditions - so his results will be very thorough. He plans on letting the cancer take its course so he can observe the results. And, he will be doing the autopsies eventually, so he can study the effects post-mortem.

Most everyone would affirm that his motivation was a good one. What this doctor was doing could have saved millions of lives. However, I think that most of us would agree that the way this doctor went about his research was wrong. But, if God does not exist, then why does one life have value over another? It doesn't. If someone suddenly declares they are doing something "for the greater good" how do we call anything he does right or wrong if it's all subjective?

In truth, no atheist, no agnostic, can live as if life has no value. Take, for example, New Atheist Richard Dawkins. In his book, *River Out Of Eden*, he determined that the world has "no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference". And yet, Dawkins is *very* concerned about the value of life because he thinks that teaching children religious viewpoints is akin to child abuse. He's also come up with an [alternative list of 10 Commandments](#) as a way you should live your life. He is unable to hold his position consistently. For, even though he says there is no good or evil, he certainly thinks everyone should live as if some things are right and some are wrong!

My point isn't to pick on guys like Russell of Dawkins. It's to show the inconsistency in their view of the world. And it's not just them. Anyone who has no way to ground value outside of themselves, and yet lives as if life does have value, is living life inconsistently.

Purpose

Now, we come to the problem of purpose. Almost everyone lives a life of purpose. We are all driven to find something we were "meant to do". For some, it is helping the homeless. For others, it is the pursuit of science and discovery. For many of us, it is to be a father or



mother. But, if God does not exist, then why does any of this matter ultimately? Why should I go out and earn a living to support my family as opposed to sitting on the couch all day and watching TV? If none of the things that I do have an objective purpose, then it doesn't matter in the end. It doesn't matter if I solve world peace or wash the Hindenberg. Nothing I achieve would ultimately matter.

Yet, nobody lives their life this way. Everyone lives as if they were put here for a reason - even if they are still trying to discover it. If life ultimately has no purpose then why on Earth would *anyone* be a sanitation worker or a janitor in a school? These are jobs where you are cleaning up the mess other people have made. You're dealing with their trash, their spilled glue, and lots of other really gross stuff. You're dealing with messes that someone else made and don't have to dispose of themselves. If life has no ultimate purpose, why would you subject yourself to that? Thankfully, some people do see this as a purpose. And we should *definitely* affirm the value of the work they do!

The Consistency Of Christianity

So, as we have shown, the atheistic worldview gives us a life that does not give us grounds to live happily and consistently. We cannot live life as if it has no meaning, value or purpose and still be happy. People will find a way to fill their lives with purpose, meaning, and value - even if there is no objective basis outside of themselves to ground it in.

Christianity, on the other hand, gives us two elements that give life meaning, value, and purpose; an objective force outside of humanity (God) and immortality. Because there is something to stand on outside of ourselves that gives our lives value, meaning, purpose (God) and because this life isn't the only one we get and things will be the way they "ought" to be eventually, we can live both happily and consistently in the Christian worldview.

Don't get me wrong here; this is not an argument *for* Christianity. In later articles, I will give arguments for God's existence. The point of these past two articles has been to show that whether or not God exists is a *really* important question that we need to consider. Maybe the most important of all.