Possibilities & Provocations

Summary

Is belief in Yahweh just wishful thinking, or does the question of God's existence deserve to be settled on evidence rather than psychology? This apologetics essay, introducing this web-site, pushes back against the "God as emotional crutch" argument by turning it back on the skeptic.

- The claim that belief in Yahweh is merely a psychological projection (traced to Feuerbach, Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche) directly challenged.
- An argument that motive-based objections ("you just want a father figure") are irrelevant to the actual question of whether Yahweh exists.
- The same "wishful thinking" challenge turned back on atheism and New Age belief, arguing that active disbelief is the more unnatural, effortful position.
- The unlikeness of the God of the Bible to any god humans would be inclined to invent, offered as evidence He is not a human projection.
- A closing distinction between merely believing in Yahweh and the deeper challenge of believing Yahweh — trusting what He actually says.

The full article begins on the next page.

Possibilities & Provocations

Have you ever thought, or has anyone you know, ever suggested that a Creator God is not a reality, just a comforting idea in your mind, an emotional crutch, wishful thinking? Many prominent philosophers have propagated that Yahweh is nothing more than a psychological projection. Ludwig Feuerbach first suggested this, and Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Freidrich Nietzsche and others over the years have picked up on it.

Is Yahweh just an imaginary "cosmic father" invented for our emotional protection, created in our image to comfort us, a phantom to fill the hollow places? Any challenge put this way is beset with fundamental problems. Is it fair to dismiss theism because belief in Yahweh happens to fulfill emotional needs? Is there a real connection between our psychological state of mind and the real truthfulness of our ideas?

How does what we wish to be true influence what is actually true? Psychological motivations give us information about the person who believes something, but they tell us absolutely nothing about the truth of his beliefs. An idea cannot be refuted by simply showing - even correctly - the psychological reasons why a person believes it. Why? Because psychological motivations have nothing to do with the truth of any belief. That evidence must come from other sources.

Someone might say that Israelites just want a father figure - but I say, maybe we do, maybe we don't, but what has that got to do with whether Yahweh exists or not? My claim that Yahweh is our protective Father, and the critic's that He is simply a psychological projection, could both be wrong - but neither claim on its own, is going to get us closer to the truth.

Suppose I believe, that after doing my accounts I have a large balance at the bank. Suppose you wish to determine whether this belief of mine is wishful thinking. You could never come to any useful conclusion by examining my psychological condition or motivation. That evidence would only be available by proving my arithmetic wrong. In other words, you must show purely on the evidence, that a man's idea is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong.

The initial question - Does a Creator God Exist? - must be answered with reasons of evidence first, not dismissed with misleading talk about motives. Suppose I make note of the apparent order and design of the universe, for example, and conclude that Yahweh is responsible. How could you refute me? There is only one way - address the merit of the reason and evidence itself - not my motivations for believing it.

If there are good reasons to believe in Yahweh that are not dependant upon my emotional condition, then assessing my psychological condition misses the mark entirely. One can never answer the question "Is

Yahweh just an idea?" by looking at motivations. Any refutation of His existence or self-serving adjustment of His definition must address reasons of evidence, not desires. Give me convincing arguments that Yahweh does not exist, or is something different than what He says He is, before you ask why I believe in such a fantasy.

Let's turn the question around - fair play, so to speak. Is atheism a reality, or is new age thinking a reality, or are they just ideas, wishful thinking, emotional crutches - the axe cuts both ways. Perhaps atheists reject Yahweh because they have had bad relations with their own father - maybe atheism was invented to escape the frightening implications of Yahweh's existence. Maybe new age thinkers adjust their definition of "what their God is" because they are better comforted that way.

People of all cultures, from the most primitive to the most advanced believe in some form of God. They don't have to work themselves into any belief - perhaps this is the real reason - it is simply natural! Even atheistic naturalists posit "Mother Nature". Why would they be motivated to use this particular phrase? They use it because it seems like "someone" is - assembling, building, designing, organizing.

Atheism, not belief in Yahweh, is the real anomaly - the unnatural, forced, artificial response. This active disbelief, including the active manipulation of belief practiced by new age thinkers - who design a god to fit their own needs - takes the real effort, not belief. This disbelief is premised on talking one's self out of believing in Yahweh and engaging in mental gymnastics to dissuade the obvious.

Why would anyone do that when the evidence is so apparent? Here is where the question of psychological motivation has its proper place. The motive is obvious. If we can somehow convince ourselves that Yahweh does not exist or that He exists only as we wish Him to be, then He won't be cramping our style. When it comes to our own lives we don't like to be riding in the back seat - we want to be the drivers!

Think about it. Invent a god - fashion one of your choosing. Would your god be like the God of the Bible? A god formed by the human mind would probably mirror human sensibilities and proclivities. He (or she) would think and act, more or less like we do. His morality might reflect our desires. When we erred, he'd cluck his disapproval and then dismiss our frailties with an affectionate kids-will-be-kids shrug. After all, nobody is perfect. And coincidentally, this is the kind of god most religions and new age thinkers seem to produce. Not New Covenant Israelite faith though.

The curious thing about the God of the Bible is how unlike us He is, and how very unlike anything we could even imagine. His wisdom confuses us; His purity frightens us; His compassion overwhelms us. Instead of being at our beck and call, He defies our manipulations. In His economy, the weak and humble prevail and the last become first - doesn't sound very much like a human invention does it!

Is our Israelite God just an idea? Is He within the capacity of our limited human imagination to create? Or have the atheists and new age thinkers closed their eyes, hid their faces and turned their backs for fear of trembling at the sight of the true God?

I won’t judge you for whether you believe in Yahweh or not. This book is not about belief in Yahweh - it is about believing Yahweh. It seems to me to be elementary that Yahweh exists, and the more important issue is WHAT IS HE SAYING to us. That is what this book will clear up once and for all, dispelling the myths and proving the realities. Before you judge it, read it from cover to cover - it may provoke you in more ways than you think. It is totally evidentiary in support of its radical points of view, it pulls no punches and tells it like it is - believe it or not.

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