

Thursday, June 02, 2005

## No "might be" About It: I AM an Atheist

Today I thought I'd post something a little more lighthearted, this time a point-for-point reaction to Paul Manata's amusing [You Might Be An Atheist...](#) As I read through some of his points, I couldn't help but chuckle, so I wanted to partake in the fun.

1. If you think that it's theoretically possible to stub your toe on a law of logic, you might be an atheist.

No, I don't suppose this is possible, but that's probably because I'm an atheist. You see, if I were a Christian, I would have to accept this as a real possibility, for Matthew 19:26 says "with God all things are possible" and Mark 9:23 says "all things are possible to him that believeth." Also, in Luke 18:27 we read Jesus say "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." So if I were a professing believer and yet said it is not possible for one to stub his toe on a law of logic, I would be inconsistent with my stated beliefs. But as an atheist, there is no such inconsistency.

2. If you tell people who think that humans are better than slugs that they're guilty of "speciesism," you might be an atheist.

No, I've never told anyone this, but I am an atheist. Indeed, if I were a Christian, I would probably be wrong to think I'm better than a slug, because Christianity teaches that man is depraved and cursed. On my worldview, however, the slug has to look out for himself just as I do.

3. If you think Ayn Rand's novels are far superior to Dostoevsky's, you might be an atheist.

In fact, I do think Rand's novels are superior to Dostoevsky's, but that's not because of my atheism. Rather, it's because I think it's true. I have read Rand's novels in the original English, and I've read several of Dostoevsky's in the original Russian, and consistently I find that Rand's novels have characters that are much more admirable than any that I find in any of Dostoevsky's. And while I did enjoy the epistolary *Bednie Liudi* for its story line development (in spite of its indulgent sentimentalism), I couldn't find one character that I admired in that or any other story by Dostoevsky. Who but a Christian would not admire a Howard Roark? Anyway, I wonder if Paul Manata has ever read a novel by either author. I doubt it.

Rand herself greatly admired Dostoevsky's achievements as a novelist, namely "his superb mastery of plot structure" and his ability to dissect the psychology of his characters, who were typically depraved. Rand hastened to qualify her admiration, however, saying that "his philosophy and sense of life are almost diametrically opposed to mine." (*The Romantic Manifesto*, p. 43.) She considered him, along with Victor Hugo, to be one of the "great masters" of integrating important themes with complex plot structure (p. 86) and a "top rank" Romantic novelist (p. 107). As a native Russian who took Dostoevsky as one of her highest models but who wrote her novels in English and according to an explicitly pro-reason, pro-man, pro-value philosophy, Rand is a novelist to be taken seriously by both the literary and the philosophical world.

4. If you're obsessed with telling people that they have the burden of proof, you might be an atheist.

No, I do not have such an obsession, but I am an atheist. However, if someone comes to me and says that logic finds its source in the nature and character of an invisible magic being, I won't wince at challenging him to present a proof. It's always entertaining to see the apologists scramble as they try to recover from such challenges.

5. If you think that calling yourself an agnostic is more intellectually respectable than calling yourself an atheist, you might be an atheist.

No, I wouldn't think that calling myself an agnostic is in any way, shape or form "more intellectually respectable" than calling myself an atheist, since I'm an atheist, not an agnostic. Unlike superstitious believers, I don't see anything wrong with simply being honest and admitting that I don't believe in invisible magic beings, regardless of who disapproves.

6. If the first thing you do when you go to the zoo is to run to the ape exhibit so you can see your closest relative, you might be an atheist.

Actually, the first thing I do when I go to the zoo is stand in line waiting for tickets to enter. Then I usually start viewing the exhibits

that are closest to the entrance and proceed from there. The last time I visited the zoo, I was amazed by the ostriches and how eloquently their habit of shoving their heads in the ground reminded me of some Christian apologists I know. But, that's probably because I'm an atheist.

7. If you treat Jane Goodall like a Mother Theresa, you might be an atheist.

Actually, if I ever met Jane Goodall, I wouldn't insult her by treating her like a Mother Theresa. But that's not because I'm an atheist per se. Rather, it's because I do not celebrate those who think self-sacrifice is somehow "noble" or important.

8. If you stay up 'till 3 in the morning to hear NASA's findings of the soil analysis on Mars which could show that life once existed there (as if that would somehow disprove the Bible), you might be an atheist.

No, I've never done this, but I am an atheist, and I do think that space exploration - a human achievement made possible by reason - is very exciting. As for disproving the bible, it disproves itself.

9. If you're depressed for a whole week after the findings came back negative, you might be an atheist.

No, I don't get depressed about anything. But that might have something to do with my being an atheist.

10. If you cheer yourself up by saying: "we'll get 'em next year," you might be an atheist.

Well, I am an atheist, but I'm not concerned with "getting 'em next year."

11. If you've watched "Contact" and "The Contender" 50 times, you might be an atheist.

I've watched "Contact" numerous times, but that's because I'm a big John Hurt fan, not because of my atheism. I've never seen "The Contender," though. Probably because John Hurt's not in it.

12. If you think that women can kill their unborn children but Hitler can't kill the species called "Jews," you might be an atheist.

I don't think Hitler can kill anyone now since he's dead. But I am an atheist.

13. If your kids are named Lucretius, Bertrand, Kai, and Ayn, you might be an atheist.

No, I don't have any children by those names. But did I mention that I am an atheist?

14. If you read Bertrand Russell saying this: "Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way," and then inconsistently go upstairs and kiss your wife goodnight, you might be an atheist.

For one, reading something is not sufficient to imply agreement with what has been read. Secondly, I don't have to go upstairs to kiss my wife (we sleep in the same room). And she's an atheist, just like me.

15. If you think Bill Clinton can get his jollies off by dropping his pants in front of interns but George Bush can't get his jollies off by dropping bombs on Arabs, you might be an atheist.

Well, I'm sure both these individuals can get their jollies doing whatever they please, just as some persons get their jollies by pretending that the world is being guided by an invisible magic being while fueling their hatred for atheists, homosexuals, scientists and other members of the human race. But that doesn't pose a problem for my atheism.

16. If you think man is nothing but a bag of chemicals but then act as if man has dignity by going to a friend's funeral, you might be an atheist.

I'm curious about statements like this. Does Paul Manata not realize that there are chemical compounds in the human body? If he renounced his professed belief in mysticism and adopted a rational worldview, he might come to see the truth about man's biology. He won't learn about biology by reading the bible, that much is for sure.

17. If you think "Doubting Thomas" is the Bible Character we should emulate, you might be an atheist.

Actually, I don't think the bible wants believers to emulate Doubting Thomas at all. On the contrary, I think the bible wants to encourage people to believe things without rational proof. Why else would Jesus say to Doubting Thomas "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29)? It's obvious that the bible does not teach an epistemology of reason.

18. If you think that variation within a species is proof that species turned into other species, you might be an atheist.

I'm not an expert in the mechanics of evolution, but the very fact that there are sometimes vast variations within a species does indicate something. Besides, there is ample fossil and microbiological evidence for evolution, but many people today have adopted a worldview that is opposed to scientific discovery, so it's expected that some will want to ridicule such facts.

19. If you think "good" is definitional and then act angry when someone defines "good" as hitting you in the head with a shovel, you might be an atheist.

Actually, I think it would be refreshing to find other thinkers who are willing to give terms like 'good' a stable definition. I've sought throughout the bible for just such a definition, and even though many have told me that the bible is supposed to be some kind of authority of matters of good and evil, I haven't found one definition for the term anywhere in its pages. When I point this out to apologists, they usually say something like "The bible's not a dictionary." In other words, the bible doesn't define its own terms. But as an atheist, I already knew this.

20. If you're already making up the signs: "Hillary For President in '08," you might be an atheist.

Good grief, no, I'm certainly not doing that. But I am an atheist.

21. If you spend your free time protesting and calling the ACLU because city signs say: "No Crossing," and the mere mention of a "cross" might get people to think about religion and thus violates separation of Church and State, you might be an atheist.

No, I haven't done that, either. But I am an atheist.

22. If your car has a bumper sticker on it that reads: "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty," you might be an atheist.

I actually don't even have a car (you don't need one when you live in San Francisco), much less a bumper sticker. But I am an atheist.

23. If you get upset at parents who raise their children to be Christian because those parents are "brainwashing" their kids and you say this around your children, as well as making fun of Christians on the T.V., and you also say sarcastic things when your family goes to visit its Christian uncle, like, "Boy, I hope Uncle Tom doesn't pray for 5 minutes before we eat because, you know, he's such a holy roller," you might be an atheist.

While I do think that indoctrinating philosophically defenseless minds with religious lies is a form of child abuse, I realize that parents who do this have themselves been brainwashed by persons they have poorly chosen to trust. But as a rule I do not watch any TV, and if I did I probably wouldn't want to watch adults who pretend that invisible magic beings exist. Also, I don't have an uncle named Tom. But I am an atheist.

24. If you think that scientists are neutral, non-committal observers, who are only interested in the facts but you seem to not "get it" when you watch the *Discovery Channel* and you see evolutionists cheering, crying, and drinking champagne when they find what they think is a transitional fossil, but then you hear nary a word when it turns out that it wasn't, you might be an atheist.

I think scientists are human beings and are thus just as fallible as the next guy. But if they're serious and guide their investigations with reason, they would earn the right to celebrate their achievements so far as I'm concerned. But I don't watch the *Discovery Channel*, and I don't think I've ever seen "evolutionists cheering, crying, and drinking champagne when they find what they think is a transitional fossil." But if some did this, why would someone allow this to bother him?

25. When someone asks you the name of your boat and you say, "The HMS Beagle," you might be an atheist.

I don't have a boat at all. But I am an atheist.

26. If you drag your family, kicking and screaming, to the Galapagos Islands for your family vacation, you might be an atheist.

I cannot say I've ever dragged my family "kicking and screaming" to the Galapagos Islands for our vacation. But I do think it would be a very interesting place to visit.

27. When you continuously confuse the problem of universals with the problem of concept formation, you might be an atheist.

This tells me that Paul Manata has *two* philosophical problems on his hands, and since he embraces a worldview that has no theory of

concepts (for the bible does not teach one), it's unlikely we'll ever see him produce a solution to either.

28. If you drive a Geo Metro, because you're trying to do your part to save "Mother Nature," you might be an atheist.

I don't drive a Geo Metro. But I am an atheist.

29. If you think that a chaotic explosion, known as the Big Bang, eventually turned into the ordered universe we see around us, you might be an atheist.

Personally speaking, I do not hold to the Big Bang model. But I don't know how one could prove that it didn't happen.

30. If you think that the non-living turned into the living and then point to Miller and Urey and tell people that they intelligently created life in a lab, you might be an atheist.

If they did "create life in a lab," why would I tell people otherwise? Meanwhile, I wonder how apologists might go about explaining how there is imperfection in the universe when it was supposedly created by a perfect creator.

31. If you think that the first humanoid was lucky enough to find a mate that happened to evolve in the same geographic location, within the period of time the female was fertile, and then knew what to do with his member, while telling me that nature is creative and given random chance anything can happen, when I ask you how that happened, you might be an atheist.

When I read this, my first thought was of Cain, who, after killing his brother, went into the land of Nod and suddenly found a wife (see Gen. 4). Where did she come from? No explanation is given. And yet, we're told that the entire human race came from Cain's biological parents, Adam and Eve. So if Paul has a problem with the reason-based model of evolution on this point, why does he swallow the bridge hook, line and sinker when he affirms his faith-based worldview? Is there any consistency to be found in an apologist's objections?

32. If you believe that all the flora and fauna we see came about by survival of the fittest, but then when asked "how do you know who will survive?" and you say, "the fit will survive" and you also say, in response to the query, "how do you determine which mutation was beneficial so as to make a member of a species 'fit?' that "we know that by seeing if they end up surviving," you might be an atheist.

Actually, I've never said these things, but I am an atheist.

33. When your college science teacher tells you that the ultimate goal for a member of a species is to get the most offspring into the next generation and your ethics teacher tells you that rape is morally wrong, and you don't see a problem with this, you might be an atheist.

I don't believe any of my college science teachers told me that "the ultimate goal for a member of a species is to get the most offspring into the next generation," and I don't think I would have accepted it if he did, unless he gave some good reasons for supposing so. An organism's goal is to live, regardless of what shape its consequent generations end up taking. As for my ethics teacher, I took everything he said with a grain of salt. Good thing, too. He was a Christian, and eventually committed suicide. Perhaps he wanted to be with a loved one who had "departed from the earth." If so, then he acted consistently with his stated belief in an afterlife.

34. When someone asks you what religion you are, and you say, "I'm a molecular biologist, a denomination within Scientism," you might be an atheist.

I have no religion because I have no god-belief, and I don't have a god-belief because I don't think the universe is anything like a [cartoon](#). Moreover, I'm not a molecular biologist, and I don't know what one might mean by "Scientism."

35. When you're an atheist, like Francois Tremblay, and you e-mail me asking me to give you books that have the presuppositionalist arguments in them because you're writing a book refuting presuppositionalism, which shows that you have your mind made up that we're wrong even before you've read any of our arguments, you might be an atheist.

Well, I don't think of Paul Manata as the best source to consult for reading material. But if he has a particular book in mind that actually presents some serious "presuppositionalist arguments," I'm open to suggestion. But it should be pointed out, however, that Paul is on the verge of a non sequitur here. For simply asking for Paul to recommend "books that have the presuppositionalist arguments in them" does not mean that one has not yet "read any of our arguments." This just doesn't follow. But if someone wants to be convinced of atheism, I'd suggest reading the presuppositionalist literature. I've collected some choice statements [here](#).

36. If you continue to get spanked in debates, but keep coming back for more, you might be an atheist.

That's cute, but it's pretty hard for an apologist to "spank" an atheist when that apologist is too afraid to engage the atheist's position and interact with his statements. Indeed, the apologist's whole worldview is founded, not on reason, but on fear (cf. Prov. 1:7).

by Dawson Bethick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [7:01 AM](#)

## 2 Comments:

[VanTilsGhost](#) said...

Dawson,

Very humorous response to the ponderous musings of Mr Manata. I've tried to get him to see reason from 'the other side' but alas, he's gotten himself too locked into his fearful state.

Good work!

[June 02, 2005 2:39 PM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Good one Dawson!

I also made a response to Manatas list and I posted it over at Goose. But mine is not a refutation of his list per se, but a list of my own.

Manata seems to enjoy the fact that we are making our counter lists and refuting his list. He calls us copycats (well at least he called me a copycat).

I wouldnt be suprised if he looked at your well written response to his list, and then claim to be the victor because his list is more "humorous" as he did with me LOL!

That, to me, is humorous ;)

[June 02, 2005 4:30 PM](#)