

Ask Aristotle ... on Religion!

Q: "What is [your] view of God? That is, what is [your] god like?"

A: For an answer to this question, I refer you to the essay, "[Men are Gods](#)," by Eric J. Lakits.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "I'm confused. Were you a believer and devoted Son of God?"

A: No. What in God's name ever gave you that idea?

To pave the way into the Renaissance, St. Augustine rediscovered my ideas and attempted to marry them with those of the church. However, he was misguided in doing so, and I in no way ever advocated the teachings of Christianity. Before being persuaded by Miss Rand, I advocated the idea of a "prime mover" that was the first cause of all causality. Some have interpreted this to mean "God," but that is not what I meant.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "Hello Aristotle: You look funny as a bear.

Does Objectivism allow agnostics? I don't know much about objectivism, except for this web page, but gather that it is based on reason, and that the reason for not believing in God has to do with existence, time and consciousness. The point is that no one really knows about existence, time and consciousness, so wouldn't the reasonable thing [to say be] I don't know?"

A: Damn! I thought I looked cute!

No, Objectivism does not tolerate agnosticism. As Leonard Peikoff states in a 1976 lecture on "The Philosophy of Objectivism,"

There is a widespread approach to ideas which Objectivism repudiates altogether: agnosticism. I mean this term in a sense which applies to the question of God, but to many other issues also, such as extra-sensory perception or the claim that the stars influence man's destiny. In regard to all such claims, the agnostic is the type who

says, "I can't prove these claims are true, but you can't prove they are false, so the only proper conclusion is: I don't know; no one knows; no one can know one way or the other."

The agnostic viewpoint poses as fair, impartial, and balanced. See how many fallacies you can find in it. Here are a few obvious ones: First, the agnostic allows the arbitrary into the realm of human cognition. He treats arbitrary claims as ideas proper to consider, discuss, evaluate--and then he regretfully says, "I don't know," instead of dismissing the arbitrary out of hand. Second, the onus-of-proof issue: the agnostic demands proof of a negative in a context where there is no evidence for the positive. "It's up to you," he says, "to prove that the fourth moon of Jupiter did not cause your sex life and that it was not a result of your previous incarnation as the Pharaoh of Egypt." Third, the agnostic says, "Maybe these things will one day be proved." In other words, he asserts possibilities or hypotheses with no jot of evidential basis.

The agnostic miscalculates. He thinks he is avoiding any position that will antagonize anybody. In fact, he is taking a position which is much more irrational than that of a man who takes a definite but mistaken stand on a given Issue, because the agnostic treats arbitrary claims as meriting cognitive consideration and epistemological respect. He treats the arbitrary as on a par with the rational and evidentially supported. So he is an epistemological destroyer. The agnostic thinks that he is not taking any stand at all and therefore that he is safe, secure, invulnerable to attack. The fact is that his view is one of the falsest--and the most cowardly--stands there can be.

Furthermore, only an agnostic would claim that "no one really knows about existence, time and consciousness." As it turns out, (and you will readily see if you choose to learn more about Objectivism) Objectivists are well versed in the nature of these things. The reasonable thing to say would be "yes, we most certainly DO know!"

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "Why are Christian religions so religiously intolerant? They force feed their beliefs down everyone's throat, and abuse everyone who says otherwise. Apparently if you don't worship their god you're evil and worship Satan and will go to hell (even if you don't believe in this Satan, you still worship him apparently). Christians can't even get along with each OTHER let alone anyone else (e.g., Catholicism is classed as 'cultic' by Fundamentalists, even though these two religions follow the same god and are both Christian. When will Christians learn to settle their differences with each other and everyone else, keep their beliefs to themselves, and learn that people have a right to think what they want!["?"]"

A: The first part of your question is beyond my ability to answer. I cannot know what motivates various people to behave the way they do. In many cases, it is power lust. In other cases, it is a belief that what they are doing is God's will and for the best. And the list

of motivations goes on. It would be a supreme generalization on my part to come up with any one answer that would fit all religious people.

As for the second part of your question--when will they learn to get along and let well enough alone--I suspect sometime shortly after Hell freezes over.

Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle

Q: "Can a person born and raised as Christian become an Objectivist? I feel like Objectivism is my philosophy, but...I believe in God."

A: First, I will answer your question the way it was worded, and then I will answer the question the way that I think you may have intended it.

Yes, a person can become an Objectivist even though he was raised to believe differently. Regardless of the typical liberal social theory, people are not programmed by their environment or their upbringing. Man has free will and the capacity of reason. At any time, a man can choose to face or ignore reality. In the event that he chooses to ignore or evade facts, suspend his own independent judgment, or refuse to know, then reason is no longer his guide and Objectivism is not for him. However, a man who remains in constant focus has reason--and therefore reality--as his guide. Even though he is fallible, he still has the potential to correct factual errors, even those that he was brought up to believe in all his life. In either case, Man is truly a being of self made soul.

As evidence, take my friend Eric. He was born and raised in a Catholic family. He has since rejected that belief system in favor of Objectivism. Keep in mind that it is very rare for someone to actually be brought up as an Objectivist. Ayn Rand herself was the first Objectivist and she had to create the philosophy before she could actually be one.

Now, to answer your question differently. I gather that you would like to know whether or not you can maintain your current belief system and be both a Christian and an Objectivist. The short answer to that question is "no." The reason rests in the Law of Identity--i.e., A is A. Everything has a specific definition and is what it is. By definition, Objectivism is an atheist philosophy. Its atheism has as its base the primacy of existence view of the universe which states that reality precedes consciousness, not the other way around. Before an entity can be conscious, it must first exist. Existence cannot result from consciousness, therefore the universe cannot have been created by a god which existed somehow prior to reality.

Furthermore, it would be impossible for a consciousness to be conscious if there were nothing to be conscious of. How could such a being become aware if it had no reality to differentiate itself from? How could it perceive if there were nothing to perceive? How could it form concepts and a corresponding vocabulary if there was nothing in reality to

bring these concepts back to? If you have not already done so, I would recommend that you read Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology and Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand. Both of these books provide the relevant arguments necessary to help clear up some of the confusion that you may have.