

# Human Consciousness and the Soul

## Intro

There are serious challenges facing the atheistic worldview like the origin of the universe. Where did matter and energy come from in order to form the universe? Another great challenge is the origin of human consciousness? The atheist philosopher Dr. Thomas Nagel admits that, “*Evolutionary processes cannot explain the existence of human consciousness.*” Nagel argues that the Darwinian process could not produce consciousness.

What is human consciousness? It means that humans have perceptions, thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and make choices based upon them. It refers to our individual awareness of our unique memories, emotions, sensations, and environment.

Basically many scientists are having great difficulty in explaining the origin of human consciousness through their atheistic approach to science. For instance Dr. Stuart Sutherland, (a geologist and paleontology) said that “*Consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written on it.*” Also cognitive scientist Dr. Jerry Fodor would agree. He said, “*Nobody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. Nobody even knows what it would be like.*”

Humans appear to be conscious beings; but atheists tell us that this is just an illusion. As humans we all have a sense that we’re responsible for our actions, but atheists tell us that it is not so – it’s just an illusion. Professor Susan Blackmore maintains that consciousness is an illusion but yet she admits that, “*We can’t even begin to explain consciousness.*” Her view is completely unscientific. How can she possibly know the nature or origin of something that she can’t even explain? This is the dilemma that is facing many atheistic scientists.

## The Problems with Atheism

### 1/ The Soul Problem

Atheists basically say that humans have no soul. According to them we are merely biological organisms that came into existence through a random process of evolution. Since humans have no soul therefore there is no afterlife. Atheism offers a very bleak ultimate future for humanity. There is no hope beyond death. We are soulless creatures. It is total despair!

Freelance writer Greta Christina, who publishes often in feminist and adult magazines, is brutally honest regarding her dilemma about dying. As an atheist, she realizes she has a problem with facing death and doesn’t believe in an afterlife. Writing in a magazine popular with skeptics called the *Skeptical Inquirer*, she admits:

“Death can be an appalling thing to think about. Not just frightening, not just painful. It can be paralyzing. The fact that your life span is an infinitesimally tiny fragment in the life of the universe, that there is, at the very least, a strong possibility that when you die, you disappear completely and forever, and that in 500 years nobody will remember you and in five billion years Earth will fall into the Sun. This can be a profound and defining truth about your existence that you reflexively repulse, that you flinch away from and refuse to accept or even think about, consistently pushing it to the back of your mind whenever it sneaks up for fear that if you allow it to sit in your mind even for a minute, it will swallow everything else. It can make everything you do, and anything anyone else does, seem meaningless, trivial to the point of absurdity. It can make you feel erased, wipe out joy, make your life seem like ashes in your hands.”

Wow! How depressing! But that's the reality that an atheist faces – total despair and no hope whatsoever.

A teen wrote to the atheist psychologist Dr. Darrell Ray:

*“Dear Darrell I have recently decided that I am an atheist. The problem is that I am now much more anxious about my own mortality, and the mortality of the people I care about. It is scary to suddenly feel like there isn't a God looking out for us and that there will just be nothing after we die. Also I can't help being afraid that if I am wrong I will go to Hell. How should I cope with these fears?”*

Can I tell you? Atheism sucks! It is total despair with no hope or meaning in life. It's a system that in essence tells us that we are just an accident of nature and that we have nothing to look forward after we die. This type of mentality has grave consequences. It erodes our self-worth, and that's the next serious problem.

### 2/ The Self-worth Problem

We live in an increasingly depersonalized society. It seems to me that more and more we are just a number on a long list with other numbers. Also there are things being taught and conveyed to us that are destroying our self-worth and self-esteem.

Atheistic evolution teaches that we are just a random process and that we have evolved from some slime in the pond. It says that humans are only a biological organism and that we have no soul or spirit. It also teaches that death is final and that life has no ultimate meaning or purpose. To be honest with you this devalues humanity's self-worth and the sanctity of life.

### 3/ The Sanctity of Life Problem

The phrase sanctity of life refers to the idea that human life is sacred, holy, and precious. I believe that the atheistic worldview has had a tremendous influence on euthanasia and abortion.

What abortion really teaches is that we are just an embryonic tissue, an inconvenience. There is no sanctity of life; therefore there is no value given to conception and pregnancy. Humans are merely biological organisms that can be terminated. The conception of human life has no value or worth.

### 4/ The Morality Problem

Think about it, in atheism, there is no absolute moral of right and wrong. There is no moral "should and shouldn't". Why? Because when you remove God, you remove the standard by which objective moral truth is established. In atheism, morality is up for grabs.

Dr. Francis Collins, the physician and geneticist who lead the Human Genome Project, argues that theism is more rational than atheism. Collins also found C. S. Lewis persuasive and after reading his book *Mere Christianity* and he came to believe that a rational person would be more likely to believe in a god. Collins argues: *“How is it that we, and all other members of our species, unique in the animal kingdom, know what's right and what's wrong... I reject the idea that that is an evolutionary consequence, because that moral law sometimes tells us that the right thing to do is very self-destructive. If I'm walking down the riverbank, and a man is drowning, even if I don't know how to swim very well, I feel this urge that the right thing to do is to try to save that person. Evolution would tell me exactly the opposite: preserve your DNA. Who cares about the guy who's drowning? He's one of the weaker ones, let him go. It's your DNA that needs to survive. And yet that's not what's written within me.”*

We cannot deny the fact that we are moral beings with a conscience.

## 5/ The Meaning of Life Problem

Does life have a meaning and purpose? This has been one of the major concerns for the millennials (those born from the mid-1990's to early 2000's). Their greatest fear is living a life without meaning.

Atheism has contributed to the belief of Nihilism. Nihilism is the rejection of all religious and moral principles, in the belief that life is meaningless. It believes that nothing in the world has objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. Nihilism is a philosophical position held by many philosophers. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was one of its proponents.

Atheistic philosophers are ever searching for the meaning of life. They are forever trying to define truth and reality but they are still searching. Philosophy comes short in giving humanity meaning and purpose because there are so many views and no one knows with certainty which one is true. Here are a few quotes from some atheistic philosophers who were facing death in despair.

François Voltaire was the most influential French atheist of Europe in his day. On his deathbed he cried out with his dying breath: "*Oh Christ!*" "*O Lord Jesus I must die - abandoned by God and men.*" His condition had become so frightful at the time of his death that his associates left his bedside. His nurse said repeatedly, "*For all the wealth of Europe I would never see another atheist die!*"

Honore Mirabeau, a leading political organizer of the French Revolution and atheist said: "*My sufferings are intolerable: I have in me a hundred years of life, but not a moment's courage. Give me more opium that I may not think of eternity! O Christ, O Jesus Christ!*"

A newspaper article referred to a striking story in an anonymous book of memoirs published not long ago. The writer met the woman who nursed the great agnostic, Professor J. H. Huxley, through his last illness. She said that as he lay dying the great skeptic suddenly looked up at some sight invisible to mortal eyes, and, staring a while, whispered at last, "*So it is true.*"

In Ecclesiastes 3:11 we read, "*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*"

We cannot deny the fact that God put eternity into every human being. Humanity feels the tug of eternity and desires everlasting life.

Canadian author Douglas Coupland wrote a book called, *Life After God*. Coupland is the unofficial voice of the Millennial generation. In his book he calls his contemporaries the first generation raised without religion and you get some sense in the book of the aimlessness, purposelessness of the main character in his book. The main character can't escape the guilt he feels. His wife leaves him because she falls out of love with him, and he can't bring himself to love again. He feels trapped in a meaningless job. He puts up with shallow relationships. He says, "I'm tired of compromising." He complains that he doesn't feel life like he used to. After 358 pages Coupland ends his book with this startling conclusion. Let me read it to you:

*"Now, here is my secret. I tell you with an openness of heart I doubt I will ever have again. So I pray you're in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God, that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I am no longer capable of giving. To help me be kind, because I no longer seem capable of kindness. I need God to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love."*

That is an honest cry from the human heart.

## **Human Consciousness comes from the Creator, God**

But the Bible teaches us that we have a soul and spirit. Our consciousness comes from God because we were created in His image. Our perceptions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, emotions, sensations, and our conscious being was created by God.

We are of infinite worth. We are important and valued by the Creator. Our souls are priceless in God's eyes. That is why Christ came to our planet. Christ said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). He came to give us life and meaning.

Though it may be hard to understand, much less to believe, it is nonetheless true. If you were the only one in the whole world that stood in need of help and everlasting life, Jesus Christ would have come for you alone. That's how precious your eternal soul is to him.

From the manger to the cross God cries out, *"You are of great worth to me. I value you and love with an unfailing love."*

## **We are dearly loved by God**

God has lavished His love upon us. *"For God so-o-o-o-o loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

The sending of God's Son, Jesus, was both the revelation of His love and the very essence of love for all humanity.

When we are truly loved by someone, especially our Creator these are the messages or feelings that are conveyed to us:

- I am precious, I am of great worth and value,
- I am important, I am wanted,
- I am cared for, I am the apple of God's eye!

And this in the end gives us meaning, security, self-worth, happiness, joy, peace, understanding etc. It makes you want to live!! ***God is love, and Love is Powerful!***

## **Conclusion**

In his book *Unbelievable*, Justin Brierly shares the story of Jennifer Fulwiler who as a child was raised on a diet of "science, reason, and evidence-based rational thought." Her bedtime reading was Carl Sagan's astronomy book *Cosmos*. From a young age, she knew that the world ran according to a well-established set of natural laws, and science. Jennifer remained a happy atheist as an adult and into the early years of her marriage. However, shortly after the birth of her first child, she experienced a dramatic shift in her thinking. Jennifer describes it this way:

*"I looked down and thought: 'What is this baby?' And I thought 'Well, from a pure atheist, materialist perspective he is a randomly evolved collection of chemical reactions.' And I realized if that's true then all the love that I feel for him is nothing more than chemical reactions in our brain. And I looked down at him and I thought: 'That's not true. It's not the truth.'"*

That moment was a turning point for her, one which would eventually lead her to Christian faith as described in her book, *Something Other Than God*. Something had clicked for Jennifer. The scientific explanations she had grown up with weren't enough to explain the totality of what she was experiencing in the bond with her child. All of her knowledge of science couldn't explain the actual experience of fully fledged love. (Justin Brierly, *Unbelievable*, SPCK Publishing, 2017, page 71).

Dr. Francis Collins (director of the Human Genome Project) confessed, *“I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as “What is the meaning of life?” “Why am I here?” “Why does mathematics work, anyway?” “If the universe had a beginning, who created it?” “Why are the physical constants in the universe so finely tuned to allow the possibility of complex life forms?” “Why do humans have a moral sense?” “What happens after we die?””* He continues, *“But reason alone cannot prove the existence of God. Faith is reason plus revelation, and the revelation part requires one to think with the spirit as well as with the mind. You have to hear the music, not just read the notes on the page. Ultimately, a leap of faith is required.”* Collins was an atheist who became a believer in God.

That’s right, Faith is reason plus revelation. The Creator God has not left us in the dark to grope about for the meaning of life and the intrinsic value of life. He has revealed Himself supremely through His Son Jesus Christ. And only through Christ will we understand human consciousness, that we are precious souls valued by God and that He loves us. Folks, we need hope. Death is not the end for those who believe and receive Christ. He is the ANSWER!