

Why an Atheist Association?

1. Atheism is not a philosophy. It just excludes some particularly irrational philosophies. It just cuts out one specific wrong idea without necessarily involving any positive ideas or aims, just as, for instance, some »Alamiism« (=>disbelief in witches«) or »Achloranthropism« (=>disbelief in little green men«) would do. As the two disbeliefs mentioned last, to which in principle an infinity of others might be added, are very widely or even unchallengedly held, not even the corresponding terms are existing and nobody will miss them. With »atheism«, things would be very much the same if the belief in one or several supernatural beings was not widespread. A special organization of atheists, as it would, on the contrary, be necessary for the cultivation of a philosophy, even of a more or less elaborated rational one (without organization no science, for instance), is therefore not necessary considering the characteristic features of the matter.

2. The absence of a god or similar concepts in a person's mind, however, is threatened by exterior forces. The very greatest part of mankind lives under the supremacy or the unpleasantly strong influence of organizations intending to press these imaginations into their heads. As the imagination of a god neither can be conceived nor maintained if there is not at the same time at least a minimum of exactness and interindividual homogeneity of it, it is necessary to inoculate it from outside by manipulation or by force. Every religion without any exception therefore uses trickery or force or both and will never abstain from exploiting situations of temporary weakness (childhood, sickness, economical and social difficulties). They feel and know that they could not exist if they refrained from doing so.

3. As the belief in a god is wrong, it is constantly endangered. It has therefore to be permanently fostered and shielded by a considerable effort at times against perceptions or intellectual operations neutralizing and counterbalancing it. As the most important instrument in producing and developing it is constant social pressure – a process, which is, for instance, illustrated in Ionesco's play »The Rhinos« –, it is in any case endangered by gaps in the system of mutual reinforcement in maintaining inoculated delusional ideas. To put it in other words: any non-believer perceived by a believer potentially always has the effect of the child in Andersen's fairy tale »The Emperor's New Clothes«. The effect described therefore results from his or her mere existence already. This is the reason why every religious organization, whenever it has the chance to do so, attempts to eliminate every single atheist. The most appropriate means to do so doubtlessly is his physical liquidation, from which they therefore will never abstain, if they are able to achieve it. If they are not, they try another way to minimize the danger for them resulting from his (or her) existence, mainly by impeding him in expressing his opinions or by pressure on his social existence. **As long as there are believers, therefore all atheists will be threatened.** As they

are a potential danger to the believers as such by their mere existence, the believers imperil theirs – not by **their** existence, after all, but by their inevitable aggression. For, as, on the one hand, the believers have to force themselves to believe, but, on the other hand, the absence of belief does not make any effort necessary to maintain it, the power of any so-to-say contagious example resp. model increases the effort they have to make even more (that is, tortures them, as they see it subjectively) and makes them therefore wish that the source of infection should disappear, or rather makes them engage in having it disappear. (The fact that they additionally attempt to press ways of life they declare desirable for their followers on to everybody else as well – just think of the pressure the churches or the Ulema are exerting on legislation concerning abortion law or pig breeding, for instance – may be mentioned here just as an annex, but it is of less fundamental importance than the context explained above.)

4. As therefore any atheist is at least potentially, in most cases, however, even actually endangered as long as religion exists – if you wish to have a gross example from present times, just think of the Islamic countries, for instance, and perhaps soon of the former Soviet Union's fragments – the alliance of all atheists, if possible, is advisable for reasons of defense. In this association, measures of defense will mainly be directed against measures of the state granting privileges to religions either by allowing them to take advantage of situations of weakness, mainly the indoctrination of children, or by restricting the freedom of expressing one's opinion in the critique of religion, finally by granting the religious organizations subsidies, privileges or preferential access to the state's propaganda machineries or to committees taking legal decisions and thus let them have a share in the state's authority. (To my opinion it would also be important that an association of atheists, as long as it is not able to abolish all religions, at least urgently demands their being treated equally, irrespective of the number of their followers, as an organization of a standard religion opposing reason and knowledge will naturally be considerably more dangerous for the latter than a lot of different, sometimes even petty religions; any rivalry between religions has, according to the principle of mutual parody, an effect comparable to that I described above (in § 3 concerning the perception of non-believers by believers). Therefore, in my opinion, it is a completely wrong and foolish attitude for an atheist organization to gloat over the persecution of petty religions, i.e. the so-called sects, which in my country, after the Sanyassins, at present the members of Scientology Church are the victims of, or even aid and abet it in a active manner.) A further task of any atheist association will advantageously be the immunization of its own members against religious propaganda by explaining them, as a preventive measure, the most important examples of its exponents' false reasoning; for, as the religions dispose of a huge machinery of paid staff, they are able to keep an immense number of specialized apologists, in many cases disguised by public positions (journalist, professor), whose function mainly is the cultivation of particular errors in reasoning, for instance begging the question, the propagandistic use of actual or seeming gaps in scientific knowledge (one section could be characterized

by the nickname »quantum theology«), the confounding of the onus probandi question as far as positive statements are concerned, etc. As a single person has nothing equivalent to set against a machinery well established for centuries and, what is more, an apparatus of full-time staff, based on the division of labour – he is at best able to find out by himself every single error of reasoning constructed elaborately on behalf of religion that is constantly hailing down on him from the most different levels of society and verbalization, but he is not able to clearly understand at once the division of the different sophisticated vicious reasonings upon different persons, who may even pretend to oppose each other etc. – it is useful for him, if the atheist organization saves him part of his work and prepares him to meet with – open or disguised – advocates of religion. It thus saves him a lot of work, by which an average individual is in danger of being worn out or suffocated.

5. As religion from the reasons explained above will never be able to refrain from being a threat to all free-thinking individuals (»atheists«), the consequence is, that the defensive strategy of the latter has to include an offensive one, namely to eradicate religion as thoroughly as possible; the innate character of religions, especially of the dogmatic religions (»book religions«), which explicitly need the sacrificium intellectus in order to survive, does not leave any alternative to the atheists, if they want to survive. It will therefore also be one of the duties of an atheists' association to strip the religions of their followers by information, agitation, satire, and other appropriate means, until there are no more followers left to them.

6. By analogy to medical science, the purpose of which is the curing of diseases but not the exerting of political or ideological influence on their actual and potential carriers, the substance respectively the aim of atheism is a negative-defensive one, that is the elimination of a particular mental disturbance. (If the latter was not induced by society and coddled and fostered accordingly and shielded from therapy, the struggle against it would probably be incomparably easier.) Everything else in respect to this innate trait of atheism has been said at the beginning of this article; the unrenouncable consequence from this, however, is, that an association of atheists has to take a neutral position as to philosophical as well as to political issues and accordingly has to grant access to at least any atheist declaring his loyalty to the cause without making any differences. The insight that there are no gods of whatever kind or stages of dilution, does not at all result in a particular attitude towards brushing one's teeth or, to put it in a more present-day-language, towards vivisection, vegetarianism, control of epidemics, towards the legal time limit for abortion, towards the war at the time etc. An association of atheists had better not demand from its members to hold particular opinions as to these issues and any other matters of way of life or general legislation. It only demands a distinctive attitude towards a legislation that grants special privileges to any religion, as well as, of course, the exclusion of any religious organization from legislation itself. Any religion should only be entitled to demand anything from its followers (whilst the voluntariness of membership has to be guaranteed), but it should

not dispose of the state machinery in order to enforce these demands, be it against its adherents, be it against all citizens. No association of atheists should demand particular opinions or statements from its members beyond this minimal consent; it will lose its intended nature by acting that way and will gain the character of an ideological or political association. Although it has to be free to discuss about or point out respectively attack the influence religion takes at the various positions of society, notably in respect to legislation apart from religious issues, too; but it has to abstain from any positive statement of any particular opinion of its own concerning the issues mentioned above. Religion is a severe evil, but not the only one; anyone, who wants to fight against other evils must still be at liberty to do this in a way that seems appropriate to him and at any place he wishes to, but not at liberty to be allowed to make use of the atheists' association itself for this additional purpose or to oblige it to share his or her additional aims or views – not even those he or she likes best.

Reason is, alas!, as much a historical phenomenon as its contrary; it does not flourish at all times and under all circumstances in the same way and with the same priorities. As, in consequence of this, also the paths coming from the respective background forming the traditions, that offer escape from the meshes of religion to the individual, are different, as therefore quite different potentials of atheists exist at the same time, it is advisable for any supporter of an association of atheists to accept my principles from practical reasons already – at least, if they want to win.

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