

Why I Am An Agnostic

Before going any further let's distinguish between three terms: *agnostic*, *atheist* and *true believer*. Each of these represents a position that one can take on the existence of God as a being who created the universe. True believers are simply people who uncritically embrace any belief or system of beliefs for which empirical validation is not possible. Relative to the question at hand, true believers make a categorical assertion that a being called God exists. An atheist on the other hand denies any belief or system of belief for which empirical validation is not possible. In the case at hand, an atheist categorically asserts that a being called God does not exist. In the cases of true believers and atheists the psychological processes underlying their apparent contradictory positions is very similar. Both make absolute assertions about something that they can't possibly prove. An agnostic on the other hand takes a middle road between these two extremes and simply pleads ignorance. While not limited to religious beliefs, it is within this context that one most frequently encounters the use of the terms just described. Agnostics recognize that neither claim can be put to a factual test and validated and therefore take no position on the question. The existence or non-existence of a being called God is a question of belief rather than one of fact. The one requires blind faith and the other empirical evidence. Clearly, a very large contingent of the world's population has historically been true believers of one sort or another.

Thus, I am an agnostic because I can see no way to give belief or disbelief in a being called God a factual basis. Related to the question of whether or not a Supreme Being who created the universe exists there is the issue of religious belief. Because I am aware of strong human tendencies toward erroneous explanations and irrational thinking, I cannot embrace religious beliefs. Magical explanations can have a strong emotional appeal and may moderate existential anxiety, but like all delusions they are explanations that lead nowhere. Meaningful explanations foster functional understanding while magical explanations foster ignorance. I recognize and accept that there are awesome mysteries about the nature and origin of the universe that I cannot fathom, but religious explanations for these mysteries are not satisfying, and ultimately explain nothing. I might find it possible to entertain a philosophical or spiritual belief system that has at least a minimal anchor in fact and that offers a satisfying narrative explanation for the universe and our role in it. However, institutionalized religious dogma

articulated through a formal organizational structure is the antithesis of such a system. Even so belief in such a system would be tentative, not absolute.

See The Philosophy of Consciousness-without-an-object on this page as a possible philosophical system that I think may be supported by some interpretations of the meaning of quantum physics' description of reality.