

Our Religious Experience

Some people wonder if being a Realist is some kind of cold dry religion. Some people think that our religion has no soul, that we are just scientists and our beliefs are all about physics and mathematics and equations. That we believe in evolution and that our culture is based on the survival of the fittest. Are we Realists just godless heathens? Do we Realists have the passions that fire our souls the way that the theistic religions do?

Technically since other religions have passion means that humans are capable of passionate religious experience. There isn't anything that other religions do that is outside of reality. Humanity has a long history about being passionate about their deities.

As we all know, the gods of everyone else's religions are false gods. We realists only believe in one less god that the other religions don't believe in. However, if any of these deities can be proven to be real, then we would believe in all deities that actually exist.

Our religious experience is founded on the contemplation of the universe that we exist in. Our minds reach out through space and time and fill the universe with our wondering. Who are we? Why are we here? How do we understand understanding? To answer this we must first describe our creation story.

Our Creation Story

From what we understand so far, the universe started some 13.6 billion years ago with an event that we loosely call "The Big Bang". The Big Bang was the beginning of both space and time, so since time began at the Big Bang there is no such thing as "before" the Big Bang because if time didn't exist, then "before" can not exist. If this doesn't make sense to you don't worry because I don't understand it either. The idea that space and time started from a single point called a quantun singularity is something that is difficult to grasp. The idea of what happened before time existed is as confusing to me as asking a theist if God was real before he created reality.

But the smart people have figured a lot of this out and I trust them because science is a quest for the truth. Science is the process of discovering reality as it really is. It is based on evidence, logic, and discipline. Science uses the Scientific Method that we refer to as the {In:Sacred Method}. It accepts {In:Scrutiny} and in both science and the Church of reality, if something is proven wrong, then we change our minds. Science has to be 100% true to reality, because if you try to cheat with science, then science stops. Anything derived from a wrong conclusion is likely to also be wrong.

The universe started as pure energy and remained that way for about 300,000 years. As the universe expanded and cooled, early matter started to form. Early matter didn't include all the elements as we know them, just the smaller lighter ones like hydrogen and helium. Over billions of years gravity pulled the matter together and through heat and pressure they ignited as stars. These stars were nuclear reactions and over billions of years the reaction produced the heavier elements. This is the "star stuff" that Carl Sagan says we are made of.

Eventually these stars exploded and the material was kicked out into space. Gravity again took effect and new stars and planets were formed out of the new materials. These starts were second generation stars. Some 4 billion years ago this planet was formed out of the rubble and our world began.

Over time early life formed. It took billions of years to just get to single cell creatures but as time progressed life became more and more complex through natural selection. All life evolved together in a single living system with things evolving

to eat other things and adapt to a changing environment. Eventually life evolved into what we are now. Whatever that is.

In the beginning the universe was dumb. Existence just existed. It was just there, but it wasn't aware. But now on this planet life has evolved to the point where we are aware of our own existence. We are aware that we are part of reality and that reality and the universe exist. We don't know what is happening on other planets. We might be one of billions of planets where self-awareness exists, or we might be the only place in the universe where life has evolved to this level. The odds favor that we are not alone in the universe. We can make guesses about that, but at this point we just don't know. But it's something we want to find out.

Reality is aware of its own existence through us.

Since our minds have evolved self-awareness and we have become aware of our own existence and aware of the universe, and because we are parts of the reality that created us, it can be said that through us reality is aware of itself. Through us reality experiences an awareness of its own existence. That existence itself knows that it exists through us. We are the vessels through which the universe thinks. Take a moment and contemplate that.

Since we don't know if we are alone or if other life exists through which the universe experiences itself, we should treat this special planet as if we are alone in the universe and that we have a responsibility to continue to evolve and to explore until we find out what the big picture looks like. We have an opportunity to explore reality the way it really is so that reality can know itself through us.

Other religions talk about a magical experience where they feel that they are one with their creator. That God is touching their hearts and that they can feel a universal awareness of which they are a part. This fills their souls and gives passion and meaning to their lives, and it causes them to know in their heart that what they are doing is right. But where does that experience come from when the deity they experience doesn't really exist? Is it possible that the experience is real, but that their understanding of what it is isn't real?

Our minds interpret what we experience.

For example, when we look up at the sky and see lightning and hear thunder, we know that weather creates energy in the atmosphere and that clouds develop electrical charges and when those charges build up, they discharge. Early humans saw the same things but what they experienced was a battle of the gods. That a great war was going on between the forces of good and evil between deities that live in the clouds. We have been to the clouds and there's nothing there except for water vapor. Early humans experienced something. But it wasn't what they thought they experienced. They saw the lightning, but their gods didn't exist.

We understand reality collectively.

We are an evolved species. What makes us special is that humans have the ability to share knowledge and our survival is based on our ability to learn from each other. We can communicate and store information collectively which allows us to build great societies and advanced technologies millions of times more complex than can be contemplated by our individual minds. We in the Church of Reality call this collective information the {In:Tree of Knowledge} which represents the sum total of all human understanding. Even though we are individuals, we are also part of a great mental community consisting of billions of minds that are integrated into the matrix of life on this planet that sustains our existence.

When we launch telescopes into space to peer back to the beginning of time, we do not do that as individuals. We do it collectively. It is the eyes of billions of people acting as a single life-form feeding into a collective mind through which we comprehend our existence collectively. We are all members of a greater being and we think collectively through it and the universe comprehends itself through humanity, and we are part of that humanity.

Food that is good for us tastes good because of evolution.

Have you ever wondered why things that are good to eat smell good and things that are bad to eat smell bad? Do you think that's a coincidence? It's evolution. We are the descendents of those who got the eating problem right. The same is true of sex. The things that feel the best are the things that lead to pregnancy. This is not a coincidence. If we do things that enhance our ability to survive and to thrive it's going to feel good, taste good, smell good. look good, sound good.

So - connect the dots. If humanity survives through collective knowledge then the process of linking our thoughts collectively is going to feel as good as good food or good sex. We feel the oneness with each other because we need the oneness to survive and to evolve. The oneness is part of who we are and what we as humans need to do to thrive.

Science is new to our species and our planet. There is no fossil evidence that dinosaurs or dolphins built spacecraft. If they had technology their trash would still be here with us just as our trash will be here a billion years from now. Early humans looked up at the sky and wondered who they were and what kind of a world they lived in. They didn't have anyone to teach them the things we take for granted, so they started guessing and trying to figure it out. These early guesses became early religion.

Modern day law and science and social structure evolved from early religions.

Religion was part of the human evolutionary process. It was the root of modern day society, law, justice, and science. It was our first attempt at explaining the universe, who we are, and why we should get along with each other. It helped form the communities and social structures that made more complex ideas possible. In order to understand the universe we had to be able to link our minds into one great mind and only through that process could we comprehend the things we do today. As much as Atheists will hate to hear this, without religion, there would be no science. Even though the gods that religion believes in are not real.

Reality based religion is the next step in religious evolution.

The Church of Reality is the next step in the evolution of religion. We are a religion dedicated to the belief in what actually is real and dedicated to the exploration of real reality as it really is. Since our survival depends on our collective evolution in the understanding of reality it is no surprise that this experience is just as "spiritual" as that of other religions.

Our minds can feel the universe contemplating itself through us.

One can feel the universe contemplating itself through us. Our minds touch each other as one mind. We dream about a future where our children live in a world of peace and harmony, exploring the universe and understanding things that we can't even contemplate today. If we continue the way we are now, then 100 years from now if you take all the information that is stored in our minds and the information in books and computers, of everything on the planet - that information will fit on a single computer that the average person can carry in their pocket. And if we can do that in 100 years, where will we be in a billion years?

We were raised to think in terms of deities. Our minds are not computers. We learn mostly by imitating our parents and teachers. So because of our upbringing we are familiar with associating our religious passions with an omnipotent father figure. But that's not who we truly are. We are part of the evolution of reality. We are reality becoming aware of itself through us. Reality created us and just like other religions, we are trying to comprehend our creator.

We are good people because we have to be good people to survive.

So why do Realists love each other? Why do we protect each other's children? Why do we sing together? Why do we die protecting the safety of others? Why do we do these things when we know there is no reward or punishment waiting for us in some next life? We do it for the same reason that our left hand needs our right hand. For the same reason our cells don't leave our body to live as an independent single cell life-form. It's because we are all part of a bigger life-form and that humans are like cells in this greater collective being. We are more like a hive of bees than we are individuals, when it comes to survival. Humans are totally interdependent on each other.

We admire heroes because of evolution.

Think about it. What kind of stories fire your soul? We are inspired by great heroes who accomplish great things for society. We admire people who achieve great things in the face of adversity. We want the good guy to win in the end. We want the couple to live happily ever after. There's a reason we all have a good idea about what is good and bad, as if it is "written in our heart". It's the same reason that good food tastes good and good sex feels good. It's because good society is necessary for our survival and our love for each other is part of our survival. We admire heroes because society depends on the heroes.

If love came from the worship of deities then Atheists wouldn't love.

Humanity's love for each other exists across all religions and non-religions. If it came from a deity then only those who are associated with the deity will have it. One might argue that God influences everyone whether you believe in him or not. In our religion we believe that reality influences everyone whether they believe in it or not. Reality doesn't go away when you stop believing in it.

Realists hold the key to human evolution.

We as Realists hold a special place in society because we are the heroes of the religious world. We are the ones who dedicate our lives to keeping the social systems honest. We are the ones who stop the wars that others start. We are the ones who invent new things through the exploration of reality as it really is. In ancient times, to heal the sick was a miracle, now it is commonplace. We can take the heart out of one person and put it into another and have the recipient live. We are doing the things that religions call miracles because we put reality ahead of fiction. Our exploration of reality has allowed us to land on the Moon, talk to people across the world, and program rocks to think. So we have an advantage as a culture in that people from other cultures are going to naturally like Realists for the same reason that good food tastes good. People will naturally like us because we are the heroes that make society work. We are the ones who put reality first.

We can live forever - if we invest in science.

Other religions promise eternal life. We don't - yet. We can live many times longer than we do now and we might be able to live forever if we invest in technology to make it happen. Science has already more than doubled the life span of humans and we can double it again and again. And if it turns out we can't live forever, then we will at least understand why we can't. (If we understand what "forever" really means in a universe where time might not be infinite.) And if there is a God and it isn't hiding from us, then we will find it. And if we find it, then we will find the real one and know what it really wants. We will find what really is real and whatever that is, we will believe it.

We choose evolution over extinction.

The bottom line is that reality is out there and it's not going away. We can either embrace it or reject it. There are only two paths to the future for the human race; evolution and extinction. We in the Church of Reality choose evolution over extinction. We are the gateway to the infinite possibilities that the future holds for us. But we can only get there if we put reality first.