

Chapter 1: Reflecting on Modern Life

Most people in the modern world enjoy a comfortable existence. Almost every need we have is catered for. We are fed well; we have good housing, and are entertained. What more can a person ask for? Yet does this in itself divert our minds away from pondering some of life's bigger questions, or does our pursuit of these luxuries take away our time to do so? This is a difficult question to answer and I can only provide examples of my own experiences to help illustrate this point. It is quite probable that many people have had similar experiences and thoughts in their own lives and as a result of this each person who reads this can draw their own conclusion.

When I was 18 years old I had found the one thing in life that I was inclined to do was computing. I had completed school and college, and was ready to embark on my journey to university to undertake a Computing degree for four years. Life was simple and fairly trouble free. Of course I had endured some undesirable experiences in my life before this point, and these times have shaped me as a person, but this was nothing compared to some of the monstrous suffering which many people around the world have endured. Therefore as a result of my past and fortunate circumstances I was in a privileged position. I was able to fulfill my ambitions and enter my chosen field of study. However once I was able to get a taste of what I had been working towards I was quite surprised.

During the third year of my degree there was an opportunity to 'enter the real world' and complete a one-year work experience placement as an IT Technician in a successful multi-national company. This was a dream come true for many people, but for me it showed the reality of working life. What was this that I had been working towards? A nine to five existence, pressure from managers and a complete removal of the free time, which I had always enjoyed as a student. What was this for? For money? Could money compensate for my time? Unfortunately not. I saw my life in front of me. A drone sat at a desk, a life sentence and I began to question. Is this it? Is this all which I have worked for? I had never felt so empty. All of the questions of my youth came back to haunt me. What is the meaning of life? What happens after this? Is this existence meaningful and with purpose? Where did we come from? Is there a truth out there that would make my life more fulfilling? So my search began and I attempted to find meaning. Money was no longer important to me. Not millions, just enough to survive, but time to concentrate on the questions which were on my mind.

Time is freedom. Freedom to think, experience and feel. Working life does not always afford this luxury, and as a result this lead me to consider a deeper meaning to life, to seek my freedom again. How many other people feel the same way? We work, we drink, we party, and we try to forget. Does this really fulfill our lives? For some yes and for a minority of people the answer clearly is no. So where else can we turn? Where can we begin to comprehend anything else other than what is tangible in our own lives? After thousands of years of human accomplishment what have we learned? What knowledge can be passed down to us? What can give us meaning or hope for the future? So our journey begins.

Where do we begin? Fortunately society gives each of us a head start. We have access to more knowledge and teachings than we could possibly learn in our lifetime. So vast is mankind's progression in the pursuit of knowledge that we require 18 years of education before we can begin to

specialize in one particular field of study. The only problem that we encounter is that all the facts we are taught at school, and any others that we assimilate from other sources are not harmonious. Many different teachings, especially in the fields of religion vs. science, seem to contradict each other. Science teaches us about the universe in which we live and attempts to provide an explanation for its existence where as religious studies present many opposing views as to who created the universe and how it was created. These opposing teachings will be discussed later, however the need to learn all of this in order to simply pass examinations seems to leave us as average people a little confused. Where is the answer? Is there one truth or are all teachings valid?

Truth by definition implies that something is either fact or fiction, correct or incorrect, therefore logically all opposing views must be either the truth or a lie. There must be one correct answer and many incorrect alternative answers. Therefore it is our responsibility to discover what is true and what is a lie. Education simply presents us with options to explore. We need to take control and discover the root of the knowledge, which we receive to be able to effectively discern if it is truthful.

Our education essentially presents us with two choices. Ancient and modern knowledge. Great Britain and America are two examples of countries, which have been built upon the foundation of the Christian Faith where the existence of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ are prevalent in society. However due to the emergence of science these teachings are slowly being disregarded due to our increased knowledge and understanding. The ancient rituals of the church and other religious practices seem to be outdated and are regarded as an element of control rather than an advancement of mankind. The fact that there is no visible evidence of Gods existence allows modern thought to eliminate this possibility. As a result of this science has generated explanations for the origin of our universe that have removed any teaching, which considers the existence of a creator. This is where the opposition is evident and where we as individuals have to make a choice. Which one is the truth and which one is the lie. Another important question, which we must consider, is what are the consequences, if any, of the choice we make? Knowing that we have a choice allows us the freedom to learn. No longer are we bound to simply accept what we have been taught by society but we can think for ourselves and discover the truth. When we have made our choice, then we can be ready to accept its consequences.

If we have a choice to believe in a God who created us and all things, who looks after our needs, loves us and cares for us why do many people choose to turn away from these beliefs? Why would we as individuals choose to believe that there is no God, no afterlife and no heaven? Are we evolving to a point in society where such beliefs are irrelevant or disproved? Has science removed all of the universes mysteries? Or are people hiding from the truth, are people afraid to consider the existence of a creator as an attempt to ease their consciences because of the actions which we have done that may have offended him? This is a question, which can only be answered on an individual basis. Therefore I will try to convey to you my own experience.

I was raised in a lower middle class English home during the 1980's and 1990's. I attended a local Church of England Church with my family and as a child I believed in God as most children did at the time. It was only as I grew older that I began to question those beliefs. My family stopped attending this church because of simple reasons. It was too cold, too early, too focused upon raising money. Therefore we drifted away from it and as a result this brought my faith into question. As I progressed through my school life I began to learn alternative theories of life and the universe. The Big Bang,

Evolution, and knowledge of other religious beliefs left me with a sense of curiosity so I began to explore.

At this point there were many factors, which prevented me from considering that the Bible's accounts were true. What about other beliefs? Was there more than one truth? This seemed to be the case according to my education because it presented me with so many different alternatives at such a young age. My old beliefs of the past I considered to be narrow-minded. Therefore as a result of this I began to look for truth in other directions.

Towards the end of my school days I began to become interested in philosophy, eastern religion and the pursuit of inner peace. This was a long journey which led me to meet many interesting and different people and many late night discussions about the origins of life and its meaning. This was where my religious life died. My views of the church were negative and I despised its past. I saw no wisdom in its practices and had completely lost interest in its teachings, and viewed them as outdated and irrelevant to my life. I held these views even though I had never studied the Bible. This was because I had branded its teachings with the same negativity as I had given to the establishment, which claimed to follow them. Little did I know at this point in my life that the established church was more concerned with promoting itself as an organisation rather than declaring its teachings. I came to understand this many years later.

Until then I continued to search, to meditate, and contemplate many questions. All the time I was focused on bettering myself, finding peace and understanding the world around me and the people I met. However all of my questions remained unanswered. I never considered the existence of God because I had disregarded the teachings of the established church. The question rarely came into my mind. I believed that there may be a consciousness higher than our own within the universe or that somehow the universe itself was alive but I never considered that God had interacted with mankind, that the Bible contained any truth or relevance to my life. Why would I? The world hates its teachings. The people who were Christians were insulted and ridiculed at school, were seen as abnormal and outcasts and I personally struggled with being accepted by my peers at school so why would I choose to follow this religion and lose more social credibility? Like many others I followed the crowd. Everyone thought that it was nonsense and who was I to argue? I was uneducated in such matters, as were many of my friends and all the incense, prayers and other rituals that were performed at church could not change my mind. I did not learn anything about God, only how to practice ceremonies that seemed pointless to me. This was my mindset, this was what I believed and many people I knew thought the same.

So I will ask myself my own question:

“Why would we as individuals choose to believe that there is no God, no afterlife and no heaven? Are we evolving to a point in society where such beliefs are irrelevant or disproved? Has science removed all of the universes mysteries? Or are people hiding from the truth, are people afraid to consider the existence of a creator as an attempt to ease their consciences because of the actions which we have done that may have offended him?”

Because of all of the different explanations that I had been presented with I doubted that the teachings of Christianity were credible. Instead of studying the ancient knowledge and wisdom I had available to me I simply absorbed all of the alternative theories, which had been presented at school,

through my peers and the media without question. I felt that what I had learned at church was infantile and that the answer to life's bigger questions was elsewhere. I never considered a God, an afterlife or heaven because it was a part of a religious system to which I no longer subscribed. It was also not acceptable to be a part of the church by my social peers, so I was also afraid to explore these beliefs for fear of ridicule and embarrassment. At that time in my life I saw Christianity as something, which would hold me back, narrow my mind, enslave me to ritual, and other peoples judgement. I never considered any of my actions to be wrong because I only perceived that anything, which I did, would be judged by other people and not by God. He was eliminated from my mind and I wandered through endless alternatives, which left me feeling empty and even more confused than I had ever been. My faith, which was stronger as a young child was depleted, and nothing in this world could fill its void.