

Is there life after death?

Week 1...

I: How do you prove that there's life after death? How do you prove anything? There are 3 main methods of proof;

1...scientific

A...you have to observe something

B...you have to measure that observation

C...you have to be able to repeat A & B

This method is 100% accurate where it can be used, but it cannot be used everywhere.

2...forensic

Be able to collect all available information about something, then be able to reach a conclusion that is beyond a reasonable doubt but not beyond any doubt. This method applies to anything in history (whether someone or something existed in the past), the legal field (whether someone committed a crime) and to the intangible things (like does someone love you). You may use some science in forensics but you are not using the scientific method. The forensic method is not 100% accurate but its pretty close when used properly.

3...experiential

You can determine something for yourself based on your own experience and how it affect you. An example is touching what you perceive to be a hot stove. It may be hot to you but only warm to someone else. This is the least accurate method of proof.

(Read "5 deadly terms used by a woman" meme)

What method of proof would you use on the following;

1) Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy on 11/22/1963? (Forensic)

2) July 1945, you're riding in the Enola Gay with pilot Paul Tibbits. You're dropping the 1st atom bomb on Hiroshima. How do you know it will explode? (Scientific method)

3) In December 1975, I asked Patti Eslick to marry me. How did I know she would say yes? (Experiential + a little forensic)

4) How do we know Jesus Christ existed? (Forensic)

5) How do we know the bible is the most accurate historical document we have? (Forensic)

6) How did we know we could successfully send men to the Moon and back? (Scientific method)

In regards to life after death, we cannot use the scientific method because we can't observe and measure the after-life. We may be able to use the forensic method. We'll just have to see if there's enough proof to reach a conclusion. We'll have to rely on the experiential method.

II: Before we can talk about life after death, let's look at the views of the major religions on life after death.

Naturalists (materialists, non-theists, atheists, etc.) believe that your life, your existence, your "being", your body is just a collection of atoms and molecules that were put together. When your body dies, you cease to exist. But let's take this thought to its logical conclusion. If you're just a random collection of atoms and molecules, then the choices you make are because of how those atoms and molecules tell you what to do. So you don't really have a "free will". All of your thoughts and actions are due to the chemical reactions taking place in your brain and body. This is called "fatalistic determinism". That means that all of your thoughts and actions are determined by the atoms and chemicals in your brain and body. Even your reasonings and feelings are dictated by these chemicals. So you're not really accountable for your actions because your thoughts are just brain chemicals telling you how to act and behave. Therefore, you're not responsible for your thoughts and actions. In a solely material world, reasoning, morality and feelings are reduced to your brain chemicals telling you what to do. Ardent evolutionists, such as Richard Dawkins & Daniel Dennett agree that death is the cessation of life and that there's nothing after that. No heaven, no afterlife, no eternal life, no hell. You just cease to exist. They also believe that you're not morally responsible for your actions.

- Theists are people who believe in a god(s) and an afterlife but their beliefs vary widely. Some are Mormons, Hinduists, Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, reincarnationists, etc.
- Christianity is a subset of theism. But it differs significantly from other theists in their beliefs of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, heaven, hell and the afterlife.

Hinduism... 'Nirvana' (the Hindu concept of heaven) is reached when the good deeds in all of your past lives (reincarnation) outweigh the bad deeds. Then your soul, your identity, becomes absorbed and disappears into the Universal Soul. In other words, you cease to exist. *It's comparable to a raindrop (your soul) falling into the ocean (the Universal Soul).* Not much to look forward to, is it? Who determines what's a good or bad deed?

Buddhism... 'Nirvana' (the Buddhist concept of heaven which is a little different than the Hindu concept) is reached when after many reincarnated lives, you reach a state where you will be free of all 'desires'. But you'll have to be a monk to reach Nirvana in this Earthly life. A monk must abandon his family, friends & occupation and join a monastery. WOW, not cool at all! Who determines what's a good or bad deed? The 4 noble truths and the 8-fold path give you some idea but they aren't real specific.

According to an old Buddhist tradition, a woman can never reach Nirvana even if she becomes a monk. In her last reincarnated life, she must be reborn as a man who becomes a monk. Somehow, I don't see women flocking to Buddhism!

When you reach Nirvana and then die, your soul (your identity) will be extinguished

forever. *It is comparable to a candle's flame being snuffed out.* Again, not much to look forward to.

Islam...If you're a good Muslim, when you die, if you're good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, you'll make it into Paradise (the Islamic heaven). In Paradise, martyr's who are men will have sex with 72 virgins every day. The next day, those same women will be virgins all over again. The men will also get to have pure water, pure milk and pure wine everyday (this stems from Muslims living in the desert). The men wouldn't have time to think about spiritual things as all their time will be taken up by their wives. The Islamic Paradise is a sensual one, not a spiritual one. The Muslim men are not changed in Paradise. They're the same as they were on Earth, with the same strengths & weaknesses. Wouldn't this get boring after a while? No new challenges, no new adventure, you're not learning any new things. And what about the Islamic women? Or is Paradise for men only? Who determines what's a good or bad deed? The Koran gives some idea but not much.

Christianity...you'll be changed into something perfect. You'll discover new things, learn and explore to your hearts content. Maybe you'll write beautiful songs or explore the redeemed universe. You'll have a redeemed, perfect body. You'll see and interact with other perfected human beings on a perfected Earth or maybe other perfected planets. Your personality will be all that God made you to be without any negatives. God will have forgiven your sins and removed your sin nature so that only great things will remain. You will be perfect for all eternity. There will be no boredom. Now this view of heaven sounds AWESOME!

Were you personally aware of these religions view of heaven? What's the only "religion" that offers forgiveness?