



What Is an Existential God?

by

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An “Existential God” is a personal and unique understanding of God that makes sense to us based on what we know about our physical world. Let us break down this definition into its component parts. First, it is an understanding of God. This is different from just believing in God. To “understand” God means that we recognize the reality of God on some level of our being, and that God is not just some mystery beyond our cognitive abilities. This is a significant departure from how God is presented to us by organized religions who contend that God is a mystery that we should accept God without question.

This understanding of God is based on what we know about our physical world. Science and faith should not be at odds with each other. Rather, our faith beliefs should be an extension of our scientific beliefs.

An Existential God is a unique understanding of how God exists. This uniqueness comes from what we were taught about our world as well as our experiences from living in this world. Since, no two people view

the world in the exact same way, no two people will have the same understanding of God.

Our personal Existential God, then, is our own unique set of beliefs in what God is and how God interacts with us on an individual basis.

Based on Three Themes of Existentialism

The concept of an Existential God is based on the philosophical movement known as “existentialism”. Philosophical existentialism has three main themes. The first theme deals with human freedom. As individuals, we are totally free to make something of ourselves. However, we are also responsible for our actions.

The second theme deals with a sense of individuality. Each of us is unique. We are a product of our heredity and our experiences.

The third theme of existentialism is that we live life passionately. Rather than living our lives based only on reason and rational thought, we actually live our lives based on our beliefs and our values.

Three Themes of an Existential God

An Existential God follows three themes that are very similar to existentialism. First, we have a freedom to come to our own personal understanding of God. While organized religions tell us what we should believe about God, an Existential God is exercising our freedom to come to our own beliefs about God.

The second theme of an Existential God is that our understanding of God is based on our own unique understandings. Just as we each have different genes and different experiences, our personal understanding of God comes as a result of what we are taught about our world and what we personally experience in the world. In order to accept the existence of God, we have to convince ourselves that there is a way that God can coexist with what we know about our physical world.

The third theme of an Existential God is that we live our lives according to our beliefs. Once we have convinced ourselves that there is a God, then we take ownership of that belief and we start to live our lives based on that belief. We are rarely passionate about following what someone else tells us, but we are very passionate about what we have reasoned out for ourselves.

Religious Freedom

Let us talk more regarding the first theme of Existential Gods – the concept of religious freedom. We know that the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens. Historically this has meant that we are free to worship God in the way of our choosing without the government endorsing one religion over another.

Now, in addition to freedom from our government dictating what we must believe, I believe there is also a freedom from organized religions dictating what we must believe. It was not that long ago during the Spanish Inquisition where people were burned at the stake because they were branded as heretics by the Roman Catholic Church. Thankfully, the days of the Roman Catholic Church having temporal authority over people has past and we now have a much greater freedom to come to our own understanding of God.

This religious freedom should also extend to our family and friends. While it is the right of parents to raise their children in the religion of the parent's choosing, that right only extends to the point where children start developing their own beliefs in God. I consider it far more important that children grow up with a sincere belief in God, then forcing a specific religion down their throats.

With Freedom, Comes Responsibility

However, we must be responsible for this freedom from religion. First, we must recognize that no one person, or religion, knows the absolute truth about whom or what God is. Too many religions claim to be the one true religion. The only truth is that the human mind has not yet evolved enough to understand the truth of God.

Since no one knows the absolute truth, then we must respect the beliefs of others just as we expect them to respect our beliefs. For obvious reasons, we will call this the Golden Rule of Existential Gods.

Now, a good technique for developing your personal Existential God is to discuss your beliefs with others. The key word here is “discuss”. These discussions should never degrade into arguments over who is right and who is wrong. There is no right or wrong explanation of God. There are only different opinions.

Our Unique Understanding of God

The second theme of an Existential God deals with our unique understanding of God. For most people, our understanding of God begins with our religious training as a young child. At this point, our brains have not developed enough for us to question our faith. So we readily accept what is taught to us by our parents and organized religions.

However, as we reach our adolescence, our brains mature and we begin to look at God and life in a more philosophical light. Some high school and college age students begin to meditate on what makes sense to them regarding their faith. It is during these adolescent years that we begin to form our initial beliefs of a personal Existential God.

Now, while meditation is important to developing a personal Existential God, we do not truly take ownership of our beliefs until we openly

discuss our beliefs with others. Defending your own unique beliefs in a debate with others is a good method to solidify them.

In these philosophical discussions, we become exposed to the ideas and beliefs of others. We should seriously consider the beliefs of others because they are often the product of that person's own reflective thoughts on the subject. A philosophical discussion has no winners or losers. It is only an exchange of ideas.

As a result of a philosophical discussion, we may affirm our beliefs, or we may even modify our beliefs because something someone else said made sense to us. A personal Existential God is never static. It is constantly changing over our lifetime as a result of our ongoing private meditations and our public philosophical discussions.

What an Existential God Is Not

To help our understanding of what is an Existential God, let us look at what it is not. First, it is not the dogma of organized religions. The problem with dogma is that it doesn't change. An Existential God must be allowed to change over time as one discovers more about our physical world. One reason people are leaving organized religions is because they can no longer accept the dogma of the religion to be true.

Second, an Existential God is not atheism. By definition, atheists do not believe in the existence of God. The only thing they believe is what they see in the physical world. An Existential God, by definition, requires that there be a fundamental belief in the existence of God.

Third, an Existential God is not agnosticism. Agnostics believe in God, but they also believe the human mind is incapable of understanding God (i.e. God is a mystery and will always be a mystery). An Existential God, on the other hand, is an attempt to understand God. An Existential God is like establishing a scientific theory. It is based on our

scientific observations of our physical world and then trying to understand how God is an extension of that science.

Fourth, on the opposite extreme, an Existential God is not science. Science is an attempt to explain the physical laws of the universe. Since God does not conform to these laws, the reality of God must exist outside our physical world – hence, outside of science.

Finally, even though an Existential God is not science, it must not run contrary to our understanding of the physical world. If something new is discovered about our physical world, then it often becomes necessary to modify our beliefs in our Existential God.

What an Existential God Is

So, having identified what an Existential God is not, let us summarize what is an Existential God. First, it is a sincere belief in the reality of God. This God is the same God as all the other monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Second, an Existential God is an extension of our scientific understanding of our universe. Science is what we know about our physical world. Our faith, in the form of an Existential God, is what we have yet to learn.

Third, an Existential God is a set of beliefs unique to each individual. While many personal Existential Gods may be similar to each other, each person's individual Existential God will have nuances that reflect that person's unique thoughts and experiences.

Fourth, no one including all the major religions knows the ultimate truth about God. As a result, our personal Existential God is a "best guess" based on what we know. A basic principle of an Existential God is that each person's best guess is as good as any other person's best guess.

Finally, as we come to know additional things about our physical world, an Existential God must adapt to the new knowledge. As a result, our personal Existential God is constantly changing as we grow older. There are no unchangeable dogmas in an Existential God outside of the simple fact that God exists.

Benefits of an Existential God

The third theme of an Existential God is that we take ownership of our beliefs and live our lives passionately according to those beliefs. People tend to not take ownership of the dogmas of organized religions because religions dictate that we must believe in these dogmas without any explanation of how the dogma is possible. People take ownership of their beliefs when they have reasoned out their beliefs based on their own knowledge and their experience with the physical world.

Once people have developed their own personal Existential Gods and taken ownership of them, then it is only natural that people live their lives according to their beliefs. Within the context of modern existentialism, these people have a passionate commitment to their beliefs.

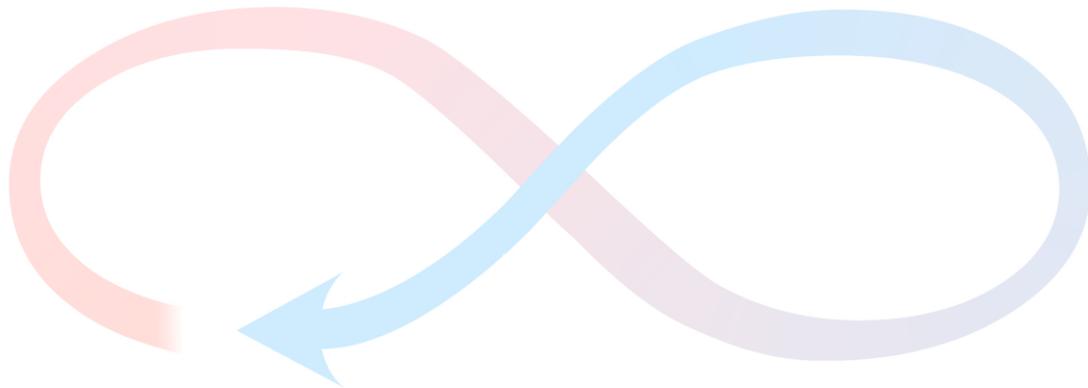
A personal Existential God leads to peace of mind. You are no longer caught between a religion that says one thing is true and science that says something quite different is true. Science and your faith now live in harmony with each other.

Hopefully, personal Existential Gods have additional benefits beyond the individual. Far too many wars have been fought throughout history over the difference in ideologies of organized religions. Once people accept that no one knows the ultimate truth, it becomes easier for people of different ideologies to live in harmony with each other.

For More Information

If you would like to learn more about Existential Gods in general, or about my personal Existential God, please visit

www.ExistentialGod.org.



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