

# **Between Faith and Doubt**

**Dialogues on Religion and Reason**

John Hick

palgrave  
macmillan

# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1. Defining the Issue: Naturalism vs. Religion	1
2. Can God's Existence Be Proved?	13
3. What Do We Mean by God?	21
4. Religion without Transcendence?	30
5. Religious Experience	39
6. Trusting Religious Experience	54
7. Despite the Religious Contradictions?	63
8. Neuroscience and Religious Experience	80
9. More on Neuroscience	89
10. Implications for Christianity	95
11. Implications for Islam	108
12. The Religions: Good or Bad?	121
13. Suffering and Wickedness	135
14. Life after Death?	145
15. Cosmic Optimism	159
<i>Notes</i>	167
<i>Index</i>	175

# Preface

This short book is meant for you if you are highly sceptical about religion, but not ready to dismiss it entirely, or if you are somewhere on the spectrum between faith and doubt. It consists in a series of dialogues between an imaginary person, David, who views with strong scepticism all beliefs about a transcendent reality, and someone else, John – me – who does believe, on the basis of religious experience, that there is a higher reality beyond the physical and the human.

The dialogues deal with the big questions facing us all. Is there any good reason to believe in God? Or is God a delusion? And what exactly do we mean by God? If not the traditional God of the churches, is there ‘something there’ in addition to the material universe of which we are part? Are the occasional unusual or ‘peak’ moments which many people have experienced momentary glimpses of a larger spiritual environment? Is it rational to trust such experiences? If so, what does this show us about the meaning of life? And about what happens after death? In each case both sides of the argument are presented by David and John.

In the dialogues I have sometimes referred to my own experiences during quite a long life – not only moments of compelling religious experience but also the experience of encountering other religions, of being in an earthquake, of being the subject of a heresy trial, of witnessing materialization mediumship.

Some readers may be tempted to skip Dialogues 8 and 9 on neuroscience, thinking that they may be too technical. But I hope that they will resist the temptation and at least look at these pages, for the technical terms are translated into plain English and the information there is in fact rather interesting, and the issues very important.

John Hick

# 1

## Defining the Issue: Naturalism vs. Religion

DAVID: It's good to see you again after all these years, John, and to have a chance to argue again as we used to in university days. I suppose you're still stuck in your web of religious illusion?

JOHN: Good to see you too. And I gather that you're still stuck in your uncritical naturalistic assumption.

DAVID: Except that it's not uncritical. It's the natural 'default' position of the modern mind. I believe that nothing but the natural, or physical, universe exists. There's no supernatural realm beyond it of gods or immortal souls or angels and devils or heaven and hell. There is only this material universe which the sciences are progressively exploring and seeking to understand.

JOHN: That's the naturalistic view. I agree that it's a possibility. But only a possibility. I think that the universe is ambiguous. That is, there can in principle be both complete and consistent naturalistic accounts of it and complete and consistent religious accounts of it, each including an account of the other. The

## 2 *Between Faith and Doubt*

naturalistic account includes religion as a delusion, while the religious account includes the sciences as describing the physical universe, but unable to go beyond that. I'm differing here of course from many religious as well as anti-religious thinkers. But I think you may agree with me about this?

DAVID: I can agree that the universe is ambiguous, but only in the sense that different people can and do understand it in different ways. But it's not inherently ambiguous. It consists simply of matter. It's unimaginably large, and within it very complex chemical structures have developed over thousands of millions of years, including eventually we large-brained human animals who have evolved on this planet, and quite possibly on other planets of other suns in this and other galaxies as well. All this is absolutely fascinating to contemplate, and it's truly awesome to think that we may quite possibly be the only minute bits of the universe that are temporarily conscious of the rest of it. But there's nothing here to suggest a supernatural reality over and above the material universe – except our natural horror at the thought of being the brief products of a vast mindless process which is soon going to extinguish us, going on endlessly as though we had never existed. Religion is very largely an antidote to a natural but generally suppressed fear of this, in other words, fear of death. So I still maintain that naturalism, as you philosophers call it, is not a mere ungrounded assumption but is what our best science has concluded.

JOHN: And I, in contrast, am trying to show you the ambiguity of the universe, over against dogmatic materialism. This is, incidentally, a reversal of roles, because

a couple of hundred years ago it was the naturalistic thinker who had to show the dogmatic religious believer that the universe is ambiguous and does not *have* to be understood religiously, while today it's the other way round. It's now we religious people who have to show the materialists that the universe does not *have* to be understood as solely physical and nothing more. Materialism, or in philosophical language physicalism, is not anything scientifically established. It's a jump from the ever advancing success of the sciences in exploring the physical universe to the assumption that there is no other reality than the physical. But it's still only an assumption, though a deeply entrenched one. Indeed, as Thomas Kuhn showed in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,<sup>1</sup> such assumptions can be so engrained in a generation or a span of generations of scientists (and the wider public whom they influence) that they can be as difficult to argue with or to supersede as the faith of a religious believer. So taking yourself as typical, when for example someone says that sometimes in prayer they are conscious of God as a surrounding invisible personal presence, you will automatically dismiss this as delusion because you think you know that there is no supranatural – which I prefer to 'supernatural' – reality. Right? Or when in some form of religious meditation someone reports experiencing an aspect of their nature that is continuous with a more ultimate transcendent reality, you will likewise automatically regard this as a delusion. And when William James wrote that 'our normal waking consciousness ... is but one special type of consciousness, while all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness

entirely different',<sup>2</sup> you automatically dismiss all such ideas? Isn't that so?

DAVID: Yes of course, but this is simply the scientific understanding of the world which has been progressively established during the last three or four centuries and is now – at least in the West – the almost universally accepted world-view, so that if anyone rejects it, it's up to them to give reasons. So I am a Humanist. I believe that there is only this world and this life and nothing beyond – so let's enjoy this life as best we can.

JOHN: Yes, and to clarify, you're not only a humanist in the sense of affirming the dignity and worth of all people, as rational beings, and wanting us all to lead good and happy lives in this world. In that sense we're all humanists; we all want people to lead good and happy lives. But your humanism is what's been both attacked and defended as materialism. And my point is that this is a faith in the sense that it's something intensely believed that nevertheless cannot be proved.

DAVID: Perhaps not proved in the strict logical sense, but it can be shown to be overwhelmingly probable – in contrast to a religious understanding of the world.

JOHN: So you say, but I want to test that claim.

DAVID: Okay. But before we launch out on that let's get rid of a possible misunderstanding. I'm a materialist – or physicalist – in the sense that I believe that nothing but matter exists. But that doesn't mean that we Humanists are materialistic in the sense of being concerned only with material possessions and having no higher interests or ideals. You'll agree, I hope,



that physicalism doesn't involve materialism in that sense?

JOHN: No, agreed, of course it doesn't. And while we're getting our language straight, can we, as I've already suggested, keep away from 'supernatural' with its association with the occult, the spooky, ghosts, witches, magic, spells and so on. Let's agree to use instead the less-polluted word 'supranatural' and, for the sake of variety, 'suprasensory'.

DAVID: Yes, by all means. And going back a step, my materialism or physicalism is indeed an assumption in the sense that it's now so well established that we don't have continually to rehearse the reasons for it. In the same way we all operate all the time on the assumption that the 'laws' of nature will continue to hold, and indeed on all sorts of lesser assumptions of daily life, such as that people will normally obey some basic social rules, like driving on their own side of the road. So that naturalism is for me a firm assumption is not in any way a point against it. You would have to undermine the reasons for it if you want me to question it.

JOHN: Yes, I know. And I also hold with the great Scottish philosopher David Hume that the regularities of nature cannot be proved but are nevertheless justifiably assumed. We couldn't live without them. And likewise with such social assumptions as that other drivers will stay on their own side of the road. But your naturalistic assumption is not in the same category. It's not a necessary assumption of daily life but a comprehensive theory which we can accept or reject. You say that the reasons for it are so obvious

that there's no need to rehearse them. But when anyone does rehearse them it turns out that logic doesn't take them as far as their naturalistic conclusion – they've only got there by a leap of faith. So let's look at your supporting reasons for it.

DAVID: Well, take the examples you just offered. Religious people may indeed have the subjective experiences in prayer and meditation that they describe. I don't need to deny that. But I say that it's a product of their own minds. Thomas Hobbes put it well: for someone 'to say that God hath spoken to him in a dream, is no more than to say he dreamed that God spake to him'.<sup>3</sup> The purely natural explanation of religious experience is sufficient by itself so that there's no need to postulate additional unobservable entities. I appeal here to Ockham's razor: don't multiply entities beyond necessity.

JOHN: I can't help being reminded here of something I read yesterday in Rumi – the great Persian Sufi mystic:<sup>4</sup>

Think how it is to have a conversation with an embryo.  
You might say, 'The world outside is vast and intricate.  
There are wheat fields and mountain passes,  
And orchards in bloom.  
At night there are millions of galaxies, and in sunlight  
The beauty of friends dancing at a wedding.'  
You ask the embryo why he, or she, stays cooped up  
In the dark with eyes closed.

Listen to the answer.

*There is no 'other world'.  
I only know what I've experienced  
You must be hallucinating.*

DAVID: That's nice. But it doesn't prove anything. I still say that mystical experience is purely subjective.

JOHN: Okay. But a caution about that word 'subjective', which can easily lead the unwary astray. All conscious experience is subjective – that is, it occurs in our consciousness and is only accessible to the experiencer. So there's nothing significant about an experience being subjective – it couldn't be otherwise. But you say there is a purely natural explanation for religious experience. What's that?

DAVID: It's part of the natural explanation of religion as a whole. As you know, there are several possibilities. From the point of view of sociology – and if you want to single out one major figure here I suppose it would be Emile Durkheim – religion came about to build and preserve social cohesion. In his study of Australian aborigines he developed the theory that the gods of primal societies were symbols of society itself, for 'a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds, merely by the power it has over them';<sup>5</sup> and he generalized this to cover religion in all its forms. Or, for Karl Marx, religion is 'the opium of the people',<sup>6</sup> giving them comfort in a heartless world, and used as a means of social control by capitalists over their workers. Or, from the psychoanalytic point of view, Sigmund Freud, who was of course the big figure here, said that 'The derivation of religious needs from the infant's helplessness and the longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible.'<sup>7</sup> And of course there have been detailed developments and elaborations of each of these since those founding figures. But you

know them yourself, and I don't need to spell them out. Don't you see any truth in any of them?

JOHN: Oh yes, I think there's an element of truth in each of them, but I don't think that any of them, or all of them together, constitute the whole truth. It's true that historically religion is largely a social phenomenon. But it's also true that the originating moments of the great world faiths have usually come through remarkable individuals – Zoroaster, the Buddha, Mahavira, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Nanak. And it's true that organized religion has typically operated as an instrument of social control. But it's also true that religion has often been the impetus for social change – for example, the Buddhist rejection of the caste structure of Indian society, or the religious motivation of the anti-slavery movement in the West, or the influence of liberation theology in South America, or Christian opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Again, it's true that in difficult or threatening circumstances people may readily take comfort from the thought of a loving heavenly Father who can protect them. And it's also true that many Christians derive comfort from belief in that same God suffering with or for them on the cross. But there are also religions, Buddhism in particular but also advaitic Hinduism, which affirm the ultimately benign nature of the universe but which do not see the ultimate reality as a personal deity. So none of these theories can apply to all religion or therefore to religion as such. Durkheim and Freud don't seem to have known anything about Buddhism, nor did Marx. So the full picture is more complex than any of these theories recognize. But nevertheless there is an element of

truth in them and it's truth about the human end of our awareness of the Transcendent, to use that term for the moment. But since the theories you've mentioned are rivals, each with its own proponents pushing it as the truth, which one do you go for?

DAVID: Well I suppose that in theory they could all be correct as explaining different aspects of religion. But basically I see religion as it lingers on in our own society today as pure wishful thinking: we would like there to be an omnipotent loving Being behind the universe in whom we can trust when life gets difficult, a greater power looking after us and making all well in the end. People would like that so much that they believe it, or at least sometimes believe it, and the churches rely on this, putting on a great show of authority, presenting the idea in universal images and impressive-sounding dogmas, with colourful liturgies and hierarchies which in the past people accepted uncritically. But today doubt has undermined that once immensely impressive structure. Science now makes a much stronger claim to authority, and through the eyes of the sciences the universe is nothing more than a vast, frigid emptiness, thinly contaminated with chemicals.

JOHN: So you say. But let me point to a basic mystery which the sciences can't explain. This is the very existence of the physical universe itself. Isn't that a mystery?

DAVID: No, that's the meaningless conundrum, Why is there something rather than nothing? It's meaningless because we can't even imagine what could count as an answer. We can't go behind the basic starting point that something *does* exist.

JOHN: No we can't, but that's not the question I'm asking. I'm asking Why does what exists take the specific form of *this* universe in which we find ourselves? The cosmologists tell us that it began with a 'big bang', the explosion of the minutest and densest possible particle some thirteen or so billion years ago into this still expanding universe of galaxies. Now if the big bang was the singularity we are told it was, an absolute beginning, what made it happen? Can something, however minute, suddenly come to be out of nothing? Can such a universe really be self-explanatory? What was there before the big bang, to bring it about?

DAVID: The answer is that there was no 'before the big bang' because time is a dimension of the physical universe. Time itself began with the big bang. So there's no question of there having to be a prior cause. The universe is a closed space-time system with no spatial or temporal outside.

JOHN: Yes, that's certainly one of the cosmological theories in the field today. But it still doesn't answer my question. Suppose that what exists *is* such a self-enclosed space-time continuum, an inside without an outside so to speak, we can still ask why that which exists takes this particular form. We can conceive of other forms it might have taken, and we both know that there are other cosmologists who do in fact propose different theories of its nature. The steady state theory has now been generally abandoned. But another possibility is that the total universe consists in a beginningless and endless series of expansions and contractions. So to describe it, whether in any

of these or in some other way, is not to *explain* it. However you describe it, it still provokes the question, why does existence take *this* particular form? Isn't that just a basic mystery?

DAVID: There are indeed different theories, and so there *is* mystery in the sense that we don't know which of them, or some other yet to be developed, is correct. But this is typical of the way science progresses. Sooner or later the cosmologists will establish that one theory, either an existing one or a quite new one, fits their observations better than all the others, and is in fact the only form that a universe *could* take, and then we shall know why it has the particular character that it has. The point is that science as it advances will eventually settle the question. What is now a mystery will then no longer be mysterious.

JOHN: That, once again, is your assumption. I think, on the contrary, that the spheres of science and religion will never clash. The sciences are progressively discovering what the physical universe is composed of and how it works. But not why it exists at all in the form in which it does exist. That will always be a mystery from the point of view of the natural sciences, a mystery which scientists quite rightly ignore in doing their work in physics or chemistry or astronomy or whatever. It's outside their remit. In Wittgenstein's famous words, 'We feel that even if *all possible* scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all.'<sup>8</sup>

DAVID: And I, alternatively, believe that all mysteries will eventually be resolved in the onward march of science. There is less and less room for God. In fact

the idea that the universe is created to be the home for humanity and that an all-powerful God controls it for our benefit and intervenes miraculously in answer to prayer is simply not credible. Do you really think that God's existence can be proved?

JOHN: Let's discuss that next time.



## 2

# Can God's Existence Be Proved?

DAVID: Do you claim that the existence of God can be proved?

JOHN: No, I don't think that any of the so-called theistic proofs succeed in proving that. Nor do most philosophers today. But they are nevertheless remarkable products of human reasoning. I think it would be worth our while to look at them again.

DAVID: I'm not a philosopher, as you know, so give me a tutorial on them.

JOHN: Okay. I suppose the most philosophically interesting is the ontological argument.

It began with Anselm, who lived in the medieval period, from 1033 to 1109. Though some scholars think that its essence can be found in Plato and in Augustine. But let's start with Anselm, who presents it very clearly and fully. He became Archbishop of Canterbury, and was a good guy in that he opposed the Crusades. He was a brilliant thinker, the most brilliant ever to have been AB of C.

DAVID: AB of C?

JOHN: Sorry. My private shorthand for the Archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm<sup>1</sup> said that by God we mean that than which no greater can be conceived, meaning by greater more perfect. If that than which no greater can be conceived exists only in the mind, it is not that than which no greater can be conceived. For if that than which no greater can be conceived exists in reality, and not only in the mind, it is greater (more perfect) than the same thing existing only in the mind. And so that than which no greater can be conceived must exist in reality as well as in our minds. Or, in other words, it is better to exist than not to exist, so that the best conceivable thing must exist – otherwise it would not be the best conceivable. This became known as the ontological argument. And although it looks at first sight like a verbal trick, and although it was challenged at the time by a monk called Gaunilo, it was many centuries before it was definitively refuted.

DAVID: And who eventually refuted it?

JOHN: It was Kant, the greatest philosopher of the modern period, who first published his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. Anselm had treated existence as an attribute that something referred to can have or can lack. So that than which no more perfect can be conceived could either have the attribute of existing in reality, or lack it and thus exist only in the mind. But the most perfect conceivable thing must include the attribute of existence. However, Kant showed that existence is not an attribute. When we say that the concept of, say a horse, has the attribute of existence, so that horses exist, we are really saying

that the concept of a horse is instantiated, that there are examples of it in the real world. So if you take the full concept of 'an-existing that-than-which-no-more-perfect-can-be-conceived' you can still ask, Is *that* concept instantiated? The mere fact of including existence in the definition of something does not guarantee that there are examples of it in reality.

DAVID: That sounds to me correct.

JOHN: Yes, like most philosophers I've long accepted Kant's critique of the argument, and Bertrand Russell's more recent way of putting the same point. And I also, incidentally, have my own critique of the second form of the argument that Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm found in Anselm.<sup>2</sup> But we needn't go into that now.

DAVID: Okay. So what other philosophical arguments are there for the existence of God?

JOHN: We come down now to Thomas Aquinas, who lived from 1225 to 1274. He produced the first cause argument, that everything that comes into existence must have a cause and the cause of the universe must be other than the universe, and this cause is what we mean by God.

DAVID: Which you find persuasive?

JOHN: No. I don't see any reason why the universe *must* have a cause. It might just BE, as itself the ultimate reality. Something must just be, but this need not be God – it might be the universe itself. And again, even if the universe does have a cause, this might perfectly well not be a God in the religious sense – it might be an entirely impersonal, non-conscious, force.

DAVID: Yes, agreed again.

JOHN: And likewise the design argument, in its contemporary form of the 'anthropic principle', which claims that the basic constants necessary for the big bang to have produced galaxies, suns, planets, life, ourselves, constitutes intelligent design. As for these basic constants, to quote the astronomer, Martin Rees,

The universe cannot have started off perfectly smooth and uniform. If it had, it would now contain hydrogen and helium gas so rarefied that there would have been less than one atom in each cubic meter everywhere. It would have been cold and dull: no galaxies, therefore no stars, no periodic table, no complexity, certainly no people. But because of the 'contrast enhancement' that's introduced by gravity during the expansion, even a slight initial uniformity could change all that. The amplitude of these nonuniformities can be described by a simple number  $Q$  – the energy difference between peaks and troughs in the density as a fraction of the total energy of the material.  $Q$  determines the scale of the biggest structures in the universe, with larger values of  $Q$  leading to a 'lumpier' universe. The computer models suggest that  $Q$  has to be about 0.00001 in order to account for present-day galaxies and clusters ... If  $Q$  were much smaller than 0.00001 galactic 'ecosystems' would never form: aggregations would take longer to develop, and their gravity would be too weak to retain gas. A very smooth universe would remain forever dark and featureless ... On the other hand, a rougher universe, with  $Q$  much larger than 0.00001, would be turbulent and violent. Lumps far larger than galaxies would condense early in its history. They would not fragment into stars: instead they would collapse into vast black holes ... <sup>3</sup>

This is what some call the fine-tuning of the universe which, they claim, requires a God to have done the fine-tuning.

DAVID: It strikes me that 'fine tuning' is a spin word, because it already applies a fine tuner. It smuggles God in surreptitiously. Don't you agree?

JOHN: As a matter of fact I do agree. Nor do I accept the argument even without that phrase. It's true that the necessary precision of the initial conditions is astonishing. So the argument is impressive, and I'm not surprised that many people are convinced by it. But it's weakened by there being another possible explanation of the data. This is the multiverse theory of innumerable universes, at least one of which happens to have all the basic constants that ours has, so that we are part of it as the only kind of universe we *could* be part of. Martin Rees (who is incidentally a very distinguished astronomer) claims that, 'the multiverse concept is already part of empirical science: we may already have intimations of other universes, and we could even draw inferences about them and the recipes that led to them. In an infinite ensemble, the existence of some universes that are seemingly fine-tuned to harbour life would occasion no surprise; our own cosmic habitat would plainly belong to this unusual subset'.<sup>4</sup> And again, even if the anthropic principle is accepted, it still doesn't lead to the God of religion. It could be an experiment by an all-powerful being who is not at all benign, or who has made a mistake, or any infant deity – as David Hume suggested – beginning to learn the art of creating.

DAVID: We seem to be agreed about that. Are there any more arguments for the existence of God?

JOHN: I think we ought to look at my friend Richard Swinburne's philosophically very precise version of something rather like the design argument. He presented this first in his book *The Existence of God*<sup>5</sup> thirty years ago. But more recently he has summarized and reformulated his argument in a shorter book *Is there a God?*<sup>6</sup> By God he means a being who is 'everlastingly omnipotent, omniscient, creator and sustainer of the universe, perfectly good, and a source of moral obligation' (18), and God has all these attributes essentially – that is, without any of them he would not be God. Further, God 'is a personal being – that is, in some sense *a person*' (4). Swinburne also holds that God, as a moral being, has duties and obligations, for 'some moral truths are moral truths quite independent of the will of God' (15).

Why should we believe that such a being exists? Swinburne puts it this way. The existence of the universe needs an explanation, for 'It is extraordinary that there should exist anything at all. Surely the most natural state of affairs is simply nothing: no universe, no God, nothing' (pp. 48–9). But since there are things, this fact demands an explanation. And

That theory of ultimate explanation is most likely to be the true one, which is the simplest theory that predicts the observable phenomena when one would not otherwise expect to find them ... Theism claims that every other object that exists is caused to exist and kept in existence by just one substance, God ... It is a hallmark of a simple explanation to postulate few causes. There could in this respect be no simpler explanation than one which postulated only one cause. (pp. 41 and 43)

In other words, the existence of the universe would not be expected, but theism predicts it, in the sense that a God, and indeed a good God, is likely, as Swinburne later argues, to have created it.

He then points to the almost incredible complexity and yet uniformity of behaviour in the world. For example, the law of gravity applies everywhere. But there is also the 'fine-tuning' of the universe, the very precise initial state in which it must have been to produce order and life. Indeed 'many eighteenth-century writers argued that there was no reason to suppose chance would throw up such beautiful organization, whereas God was able to do so and had abundant reason to do so – in the goodness ... of embodied animals and humans. Here their existence, they argued, was good evidence of the existence of God. I believe', Swinburne adds, 'this argument ... to be correct' (56–7). He concludes,

The simple hypothesis of theism leads us to expect all the phenomena I have been describing with some reasonable degree of probability. God being omnipotent is able to produce a world orderly in these respects. And he has good reason to choose to do so: a world containing human beings is a good thing. Persons have experiences, and thoughts, and can make choices, and their choices can make big differences to themselves, to others, and to the inanimate world. God, being perfectly good, is generous. He wants to share ... (52)

There is more in Swinburne's book (and in his many other books) than this. He also tackles the problem of evil, and shows how the existence of God can explain miracles, revelation and religious experience.

DAVID: And you find this persuasive?

JOHN: No, I don't.

DAVID: Why? I wonder if it's for the same as my reasons.

JOHN: Well first, Swinburne says that 'he [God] is the ultimate brute fact which explains everything else' (19).

And it is true that, if there is the kind of God that Swinburne describes, his existence would explain everything else – with the possible exception of the fact of evil in the form of pain and suffering and wickedness, which is something that we must ourselves discuss later. But why should not the physical universe itself be the ultimate brute fact, its character explaining everything within it? For a creator is not the simplest possible explanation of the universe. An even simpler one is that the physical universe is uncreated, eternally existing – this being the ultimate brute fact.

DAVID: Yes, these are my objection too. So we both accept that there are no sound philosophical arguments for the existence of God.

JOHN: There are yet other attempted proofs or arguments. But I don't think any of them is strong enough for us to need to look at them now.

DAVID: Now you are left with no reason to believe in God; so obviously you should become an atheist like me!

JOHN: I would if the kind of God we've been discussing was the kind of God I believe in. So I think we need now to ask what we mean by God.