

“Who Is More Rational: the Religious or Irreligious?”

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By Dennis Prager

LOS ANGELES, Calif.—There are very few things conservatives, liberals and leftists agree on. But, if they are irreligious, they all agree that religious Americans are more irrational than irreligious Americans.

It is a secular axiom that secularism and secular people are rooted in reason, whereas religion and the religious are rooted in irrationality.

This is what almost every college professor believes and what almost every student in America is taught. Among the intelligentsia, it is an unquestioned fact. It helps explain why, after their first or second year at college, many children return to their religious homes alienated from, and frequently contemptuous of, the religion of their parents—and often of the parents themselves.

At the time in their lives when most people are the most easily indoctrinated—approximately ages 18 to 22—young Americans hear only one message: If you want to be a rational person, you must abandon religion and embrace secularism.

Most young Americans are never exposed to a countervailing view at any time in their college life. (That’s why you should expose your college-aged child, grandchild, niece or nephew to this article.)

Yet this alleged axiom is not only completely false, it’s backwards.

■ The truth is that today the secular have a virtual monopoly on irrational beliefs.

One proof is that colleges have become the most irrational institutions in the country. Not coincidentally, they are also the most secular institutions in our society. In fact, the former is a result of the latter.

One could provide examples in every area of life. Here are but a few.

- Only secular people believe “men give birth.”
- Only secular people believe that males—providing, of course, that they say they are females—should be allowed to compete in women’s sports.

- Only secular people believe that a young girl who says she is a boy or a young boy who says he is a girl should be given puberty-blocking hormones.
- Only secular people believe that girls who say they are boys should have their healthy breasts surgically cut off.
- Only secular people believe it is good to have men in drag dance (often provocatively) in front of 5-year-olds.
- Only secular people agree with Disney dropping use of the words *boys* and *girls* at Disneyland and Disneyworld.
- Only secular people believe that "to be colorblind is to be racist." That is what is taught at nearly all secular (and religious-in-name-only) colleges in America today.
- Only secular people believe fewer police, fewer prosecutions and lower prison sentences (or no prison time at all) lead to less crime.
- Far more secular Americans than religious Americans believed that the Cleveland Indians and Washington Redskins needed to change their names because "Indians" and "Redskins" were racist—despite the fact that most native Americans didn't even think so.
- Who was more likely to support keeping children out of schools for two years; forcibly masking 2-year-olds on airplanes; and firing unvaccinated police officers, airplane pilots and members of the military—secular or religious Americans?
- How many Western supporters of Josef Stalin—the tyrant who murdered about 30 million people—were irreligious, and how many were religious?

Stanford University, a thoroughly secular institution, just released its "Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative." It informs all Stanford faculty and students of "harmful" words they should avoid and the words that should replace them.

Some examples.

- Stanford asks its students and faculty not to call themselves "American." Rather, they should call themselves "U.S. citizens." Why? Because citizens of other countries in North America and South America might be offended. Is that rational?
- Stanford asks its faculty and students not to use the term "blind study." Why? Because it "unintentionally perpetuates that disability is somehow abnormal or negative, furthering an ableist culture." Instead, Stanford faculty and students should say "masked study."

Here are two questions.

- Is Stanford's claim that being blind is not a disability rational or irrational?
- And what percentage of those who make this claim are secular?

The list of irrational (and immoral) things secular people believe—and religious people do not believe—is very long. As a quote attributed to G.K. Chesterton puts it: "When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing; they believe in anything."

Yet many people believe that the religious, not the secular, are the irrational people in our time. That, ironically, is just another irrational belief held by the secular. And, of course, it is self-serving—just as is the belief that more people have been killed by religious people (meaning, essentially, Christians) than by secular people. Yet that, too, is irrational—and false. In the last century alone, 100 million people were murdered by secular—and antireligious—regimes.

Yes, religious people have some irrational, or at least nonrational, beliefs.

But two points need to be made in this regard.

- One is that the religious beliefs that most people call "irrational" are not irrational; they are unprovable.

For example, the beliefs that there is a transcendent Creator and that this Creator is the source of our rights are not irrational; they are unprovable. Atheism—the belief that everything came from nothing—is considerably more irrational than theism.

- The other point is that human beings are programmed to believe in the nonrational.

Love is often nonrational—love of our children, romantic love, love of music and art, love of a pet; our willingness to engage in self-sacrifice for another is often nonrational—from the sacrifices children make for parents and parents for children to the sacrifices made by non-Jewish rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust.

What good religion does is provide its adherents with a moral, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually deep way to express the nonrational. Therefore, they can remain rational everywhere outside of religion. The secular, having no religion within which to innocuously express the nonrational, often end up doing so elsewhere in life.

- So only the religious believe "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but they do not believe men give birth.

- Meanwhile the irreligious don't believe "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but only they believe men give birth.