

Hermeneutics and Somatics  
The Purpose and a Perspective  
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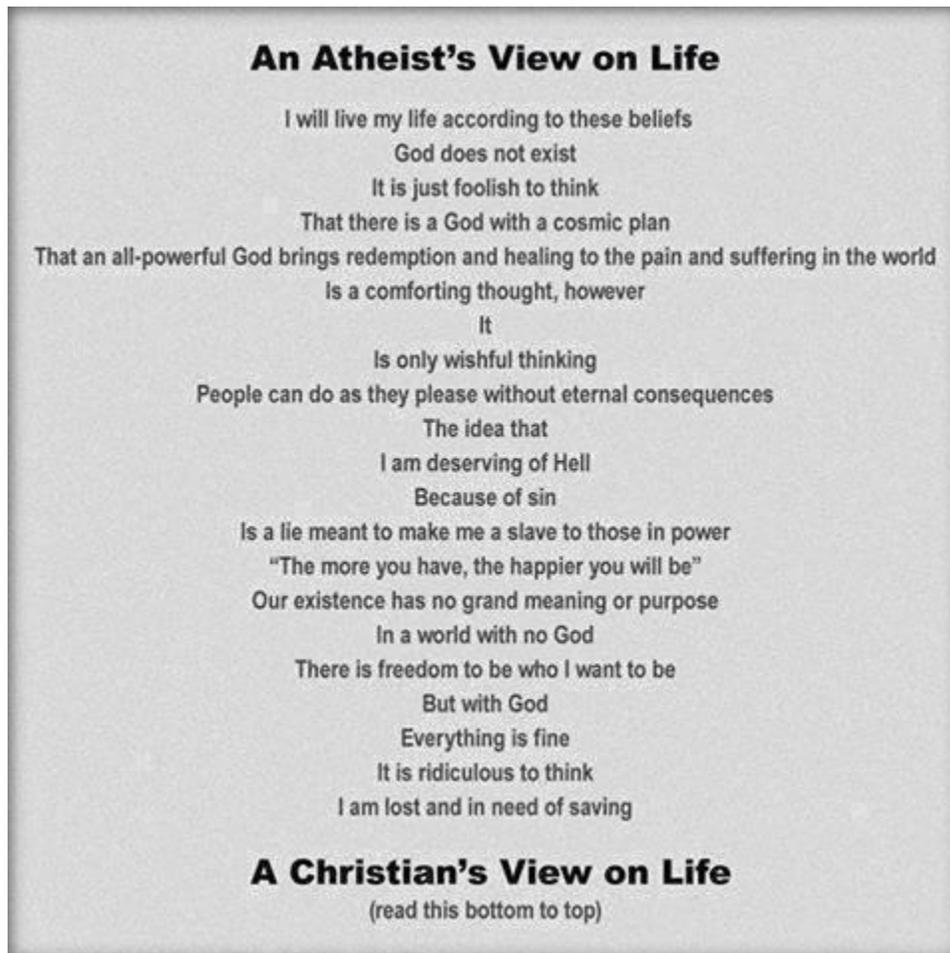
It is probable, that were the succeeding generations of the human race to learn from the successes and failures of the preceding, that humanity might blossom into a glorious utopia.

Human development consists of testing and tasting to see what is palatable or adds value. Unfortunately this may lead to an occasion of catastrophe or poisoning. Yet it is often the strange and outlandish which succeeds and brings about great advances.

We begin this journey, perhaps at conception, but definitely at some point while in the womb, observing, receiving and absorbing much of the basic essence of our existence. At this stage it is unlikely that we could consciously assess anything. But a foundation is laid for each existence to grow in many ways and directions, some of which we have yet to determine, much less explore.

But explore we must if we are to grow. From Ricoeur, by way of Palmer (1969), we see an estimation of the minds of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, who are said to have considered true thinking an exercise in suspicion and doubt. This is juxtaposed to that of Bultmann which handled symbolism with tenderness so as to uncover concealed connotations in a text. These two schools of thought, or syndromes of hermeneutics, as Palmer (1969) describes them, appear to be the constant model of contention that is evident in any struggle for authentic interpretation of a text. Yet both, at least, beg another question or many more, such that either could lead to advancement in knowledge and experience. Whether you trample a grape under foot or chew it you will still receive significant sustenance as well as nutritional benefit.

I came across a piece of work that seemed to typify the aforementioned struggle which states a particular set of convictions when read top to bottom and another when read from bottom to top.



Palmer (1969) suggests that language is perhaps the best medium through which hermeneutics is affected. Yet it is often said that "body language" is the major component of communication. There are many languages; and I do not speak of those expressed with the human mouth. We see, hear, smell, taste and feel (a physical sensation) and we assess each input to our being. But there are many more than these methods of human input; and each must be understood. It is via hermeneutics that we measure, categorize and define reactions to each encounter with reality.

The study of a text must be approached with this same somatic mentality, looking beyond the surface and unearthing the full meaning of the words which exceeds their basic definition. This process (such a mechanical sounding word) will lead to deviant applications which might strain the context but hopefully will not tear it. But without full employment of hermeneutic principles the complete interpretation cannot be ascertained.

Knowing the context of the writer, both in time and space, will add breadth to the understanding. The individual's life experience and duration can provide additional clues to aid in assembling an interpretation that is bursting at the seams with meaning.

Hermeneutics, generally speaking, is like a tool box filled with devices to be employed for understanding all that we can experience during our rational presence. Reading or hearing words only permits one to learn the words only, perhaps to be recited mindlessly. But knowing the fullness of the story and the one who lived it gives understanding, wisdom and maturity. Without full comprehension of life it is lived as no more than the lowest of brute beasts.

References:

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(Palmer, 1969)

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