Interview with Dr. Peter Boghossian

Claremont Journal of Religion’s founder, Kile Jones, had the honor of interviewing Dr. Peter Boghossian on atheism and religion, and his new book *A Manual for Creating Atheists.*
How did you get involved in what you do?

One thing I’ve learned from teaching tens of thousands of students in a wide variety of contexts is that most people don’t formulate beliefs on the basis of sufficient evidence. One of my professional objectives is to help others value evidence and reason, and consequently be more humble about what they think they know. I don’t promote atheism. I promote critical thinking, intellectual honestly, and sincerity. Atheism is a conclusion one comes to when one thinks critically, is intellectually honest, and sincere. See my video on Critical Thinking here, and my video on Sincerity here.

Describe to us the goals of your new book A Manual for Creating Atheists.

The goal of A Manual for Creating Atheists is to give readers tools to talk people out of faith and into reason. See my video about the goal of A Manual for Creating Atheists here and a video about how this goal is accomplished here.

Why do you think atheism is important for modern society?

It’s important to use a reasoning process that will align one’s beliefs with reality. Unfortunately, many people are using ways to think about the world that’s leading them astray. In a recent interview I had with Stefan Molyneux, he called relying on this way of reasoning “a backward roadmap.” He’s absolutely correct. Navigating reality by using faith is almost a guarantee that you’ll find yourself far, far from your destination. This is a personal and social tragedy.
We need to help people use roadmaps that will take them—and their communities—to destinations that will enable them to flourish. See my interview with Stefan Molyneux here.

**What would you say to those who criticize atheists for lacking morality of meaning in life?**

I’d ask them how pretending to know things they don’t know makes them moral and grants their lives meaning. See my video on pretending to know things you don’t know here.

**What would you say to students about developing a critical stance towards religion and religious beliefs?**

It’s vital to develop tools to think clearly and critically and to nurture the attitudinal dispositions that enable one to use these tools—in every arena of one’s life. Question, question, question, yes, but also learn mechanisms by which you can reliably evaluate answers. If you’re sincere, ultimately you’ll learn not only how to ask better questions, but also how to live a better life.

**Tell us about a funny situation involving your work as an atheist.**

A reporter wanted to interview me about *A Manual for Creating Atheists*. We met at a local coffee shop and then went for a walk. He asked me what questions I
find annoying. I told him that no questions annoyed me, but he pressed me for an answer. After thinking about it for quite some time, I replied, “Any question about Hitler being an atheist. You simply wouldn’t believe how many times I’ve heard that.” In the course of our brief walk we ran into two different groups of people who began chatting with us. They both questioned me about Hitler’s atheism.

Peter Boghossian’s Biography:

Dr. Peter Boghossian is a full time faculty member in Portland State University’s Philosophy Department. Peter has an extensive publication record across multiple domains of thought. His doctoral research consisted of using the Socratic method to help prison inmates to increase their critical thinking and moral reasoning abilities. Peter is a national speaker for the Center for Inquiry, a national speaker for the Secular Student Alliance, and an international speaker for the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. You can follow Peter on Twitter @peterboghossian. Peter’s book, A Manual for Creating Atheists, is available on Amazon.

(Link to Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Manual-Creating-Atheists-Peter-Boghossian/dp/1939578094)