

Albert Einstein & the Skeptic, a Chancel play

CAST

NARRATOR – Joanne Domingue

PROFESSOR – Paul Arthur

STUDENT #1 – Hilary Fylstra

STUDENT #2 – Diane Morrison

STUDENT #3 Bill Gray

NARRATOR: It is mid-September on a New Jersey college campus. Students have gathered for the initial meeting of Philosophy 101. The professor has decided that the first subject to be considered ought to be one that engages the students in a way that both challenges and disturbs them. After taking roll and explaining the rules of discussion that will be used in the class (The professor stands) he asks one of the students to stand before him. (Student #1 stands)

PROFESSOR - Are you a Christian?

STUDENT #1 – Yes sir.

PROFESSOR – So you believe in the existence of God?"

STUDENT #1 - I do.

PROFFESOR – Is God good?

STUDENT #1 – I believe God is infinite goodness.

PROFESSOR – Is God all-powerful? Can God do anything?

STUDENT #1 – Yes.

PROFESSOR – Are you good.... or are you evil?

STUDENT 31 – The Bible says we all have a propensity for evil.

PROFESSOR – But is that the truth? Let’s say a person falls sick and you have the knowledge, the ability necessary to cure him. Would you help him? Would you try?

STUDENT #1 – Yes, Sir, I would.

PROFESSOR – So, you’re good!?

STUDENT #1 – I wouldn’t say that.

PROFESSOR – But why not say that? You’d help a sick person if you could. Most of us would... if we could. But God doesn’t!

NARRATOR – At this point the professor seems to lose interest in quizzing a particular student (Student #1 sits down) and begins to direct his comments to the class as a whole.

PROFESSOR – God doesn’t help, does She? My brother was a Christian. He died of cancer, even though he prayed to God every day to heal him of his disease? How then is God good? Can any of you answer my question?

NARRATOR – No one tries to answer. In the silence the professor realizes that he has allowed the intensity of his personal emotions to swamp the class. He takes a drink of water from a glass on the desk and then, turns to another student.

PROFESSOR – Young woman (Student #2 stands) Please help me start again. Do you believe that God is good?

STUDENT #2 – Yes.

PROFESSOR – And Satan... Is the devil good?

STUDENT #1 – Absolutely not.

PROFESSOR – Where does Satan come from?

STUDENT #2 – I suppose Satan was created by God.

PROFESSOR – That’s right. God made Satan, didn’t she? Tell me. Is there other evil in this world?

STUDENT #2 - Yes, sir. Evil can be found anywhere.

PROFESSOR – And God made everything, correct? So God created evil. According to the principle that our works define who we are, then God is evil. Sickness! Immorality! Prejudice! Hatred! God created all of these. Can the author of plague be called good? The inventor of warfare called beneficent? But let us move along. Do you believe God gave us a personification of goodness in Jesus?

STUDENT #2 – (with some trepidation) – Yes, sir, I do.

PROFESSOR – Science says you have five senses that are used to identify and observe the world around you. Have you ever seen this man Jesus?

STUDENT #2 – No sir. I was born too late.

PROFESSOR – Have you ever heard him speak?

STUDENT #2 – No, sir.

PROFESSOR – Have you ever felt your Jesus, tasted your Jesus, smelled your Jesus? Have you ever had a single sensory perception of Jesus...?

NARRATOR – Completely cowed the student does not answer but sits down (Student #2 sits down) The Professor continues...

PROFESSOR – Your belief in the presence of Jesus is based on faith. And that’s the problem science has with religion. It contains no evidence, merely faith.

STUDENT #3 (Stands, unbidden) Professor is there such a thing as heat?

PROFESSOR – Yes..., certainly.

STUDENT #3 – And is there such a thing as cold?

PROFESSOR – Yes, there is cold too.

STUDENT #3 – No, sir, there isn't

NARRATOR – Suddenly the room has become very quiet. But the professor is very interested in what this student is saying. Perhaps this will be a very good semester.

STUDENT #3 – You can have heat, lots of heat, super-heat, mega-heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat but we don't have anything called cold. We can hit down to 458 degrees below zero, which is no heat, but we can't go further than that. Every body or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a body or matter have or transmit energy. Absolute zero or minus 458 degrees Fahrenheit, is the total absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat we can measure in thermal units because heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, just the absence of it.

NARRATOR – Everyone is silent, the professor, the students, the glass of water.

STUDENT #3 – What about darkness, professor?. Is there such a thing as darkness?

PROFESSOR – Absolutely... What is night if not darkness?

STUDENT #3 – Wrong again, sir. Darkness is not something. It is the absence of something. You can have low light, bright light, flashing light, but if you have no light you have nothing. We call the nothing darkness but it is nothing, still. Darkness does not exist.

NARRATOR – There was more; much more. Our student went on to suggest that death was but the absence of life; that while evolution had been accepted by scientists no one had ever seen the process of evolution at work, so these scientists were as much preachers of faith as the students. By now the class is in an uproar and the professor is thinking this might be the beginning of the best semester yet!

STUDENT #3 - Sir, one more thing. Back to the question with which you began. Is there such a thing as evil?

PROFESSOR – Of course there is. We see it every day. Violence, crime, disease all proves that evil exists.

STUDENT #3 – But, sir, evil does not exist; at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that we made up to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when we do not have God’s love present in our heart. It’s like the cold that comes when there is no heat; the darkness that results when there is no light.

NARRATOR – Having said that, Albert Einstein sat down; and the professor decided it was to be a fascinating semester in which all of them would be stunned by the range and complexity of both faith and thought. Today’s class is concluded.