

The Religion of Ordinary Life (Parts 6-7): Is Life Beautiful?

INTRODUCTION

WARNING! This session contains ideas about death that may be uncomfortable for some students.

Remind students that we have been looking at the philosophy of Don Cupitt in comparison to some traditional 'religious' ideas, such as 'God', 'soul', 'eternal life', biblical commandments, etc. But how does Cupitt think people can really live a good life if there is no 'God', no 'heaven' and no 'hell'? If we are born, live our lives and die, isn't that just a philosophy of despair? Where is the 'hope'; where is the 'beauty'?

ACTIVITY

Show students the stop-motion music video for Chet Faker's single 'Talk is Cheap' at: <https://vimeo.com/442938108>

By way of contrast, show 'Life is Beautiful' by The Afters (a Christian group) at: www.godtube.com/watch/?v=FM1CBCNU

Explain that, on The Afters' website, the lead singer, Josh Havens, says, 'The only true alchemy in this world occurs when trials turn to gold, the debris and heartbreak of life transformed and polished into shining beauty by a loving, unseen hand. We try to catch a glimpse of this remarkable change in action, yet human eyes fail us. However, once these storms of life pass, we see the afterglow through signs as sure as Noah's ancient rainbow. A loved one overcomes. Morning breaks after an impossibly long night. Grace thunders through spiritual drought with a mighty downpour of living water. All of this, and more, affirms the fact that yes, life is beautiful.'

Ask the students to respond to such questions as:

- *What do these two short films say about life and death?*
- *Is it **better** to believe in God than not? Why / why not?*

ACTIVITY

Show students Parts 6 and 7 of Cupitt's 'The Religion of Ordinary Life' on 'The End of the Real World' and 'Death' (see session 22 for the full text). Provide some reading and reflection time and ask students to comment on anything they find puzzling, interesting or

contentious.

After some time exchanging views, get some feedback from the groups and encourage an exchange of views and ideas, especially on the idea of comparing belief in God as 'an unseen hand' with Cupitt's 'Religion of Ordinary Life'.

In particular bring out some of their thinking on such ideas as:

- *What is the best way to live life so that we are best prepared for death?*

CONCLUSION

Play 'Imagine' by John Lennon, e.g., with the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugrAo8wEPiI> [Music starts about 40 seconds into the film] and point out that the song includes the idea that life would be better without 'religion'. Ask students to say what they think Lennon was referring to when singing about 'religion'. For example, did he mean religion as a whole, or particular forms of 'religion', or what?