

## RESOURCE 6.5

## Examples of 'hard atheism'

David Herbert and Josh Bullock interviewed 67 non-religious people in their 20s–30s, across 25 European cities. These interviewees were mostly 'engaged unbelievers' – active in overtly non-religious organisations/networks.<sup>3</sup>

A minority (34 per cent) expressed 'soft atheist' ideas, where they were open to non-materialist explanations of the world. However, the majority (66 per cent) expressed 'hard atheist' views – ones that rule out any explanations other than those based in rationalist, materialist terms. Here are some of their responses when they were asked to define what they meant by 'atheist' and 'agnostic'.

**1** An atheist to me is someone who categorically rejects the existence of any[thing] supernatural, so someone who believes that the world can be explained scientifically.

**2** Atheism is very simply just the rejection of deities, or of supernatural entities ... To me atheism – and I know this is not something a lot of people like to hear – but to me, for a lot of people being an atheist is a choice, just as much as being religious.

**3** I'm an atheist in that I don't believe that there's a God, but I'm kind of agnostic in the sense if I boil it all the way down, I can't deny that actually maybe there is a reason for this ... maybe there is some kind of other thing above and beyond us that completely transcends our ability to understand.

**4** I'm atheist because obviously I have not seen any sort of evidence for the supernatural or a God. So, I can't believe in it, if that makes sense. And I'm agnostic too, because it's knowledge I don't know for sure.

**5** I would also never say that I'm 100 per cent atheist. I just don't like categories and belonging to one category. I don't know.

**7** I would say I don't believe in supernatural phenomena. What I do believe is that there are certain phenomena that we as people just can't explain yet.

**6** Well, I'm definitely an atheist. And I'm also a non-religious person. I'm certain of these two things. I'm not an agnostic, I'm also not sceptical about everything, but I'm also not a humanist.

**8** I probably have some superstitious beliefs, because humans are superstitious people, but when I can think about these things and rationalise, I don't really let them control me.

<sup>3</sup> David Herbert & Josh Bullock (2020) *Reaching for a new sense of connection: soft atheism and 'patch and make do' spirituality amongst nonreligious European millennials*, *Culture and Religion*, 21:2, 157-177