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What Every Atheist Must Decide About Morality

I can see a little old lady coming down the street and she's carrying a great big purse. It suddenly occurs to me that she's very little and old, and it would be incredibly easy to just knock her over and grab the purse. But I don't do it. Why not?

The common answer today is that I don't do it because she would suffer, and suffering isn't nice. This answer is intuitively right and fair, but where does it come from?

Do we make the rules together?

Most people point to the rule of common assent which is the idea that if enough people think something's wrong, then we should all agree. This is the democratisation of ethics, with humans being the ultimate arbiters of our own ethical standards.

But if we press the question further and ask why we should personally abide by society's rules, we have to fall back on personal benefit. We fear being looked down on by society, being shunned, fined or sent to jail. In the end, our compliance relies on our self-interest.

Another problem with this is that people aren't always right. If you were born into a huge tribe of Nazis and the old lady was one of only a few Jews, would you be wrong to beat her up? If yes, then this answer from common social customs is doubly flawed. We all intuitively feel that beating up an old lady would still be objectively wrong no matter how many people thought otherwise. As Augustine said, *"right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it."*

Does evolution make the rules?

So where do our deeply embedded ideas of ethics come from? Many today would point to evolution as the source of our conscience. According to this theory, natural selection has developed in us certain moral instincts that encourage every member of a tribe to look after the others, as this fosters tribal cohesion which helps the whole tribe to thrive, and therefore every member of the tribe with it.

This idea fits well with the many honour-shame based cultures we see around the world. The answer that a shame-honour culture gives to the question "should I mug that lady" is that I shouldn't do it because it would make me a despicable person, unworthy of respect. People would despise me for picking on the weak. It wouldn't be strong of me, and it's critical that strength is respected. That approach is really self-regarding. You are thinking almost entirely of yourself and your tribe - about honour and reputation.

But our modern moral intuition goes beyond both the arguments from evolutionary advantage and an honour-shame approach, as we would consider the welfare of that old lady whether or not she was a member of our tribe, able to guard and help our children flourish.

Our strange ethics

Our moral intuition is historically unique. Each of the foundations laid out above for ethical approaches are based on our own personal benefit. “We shouldn’t do it because other people say so (and I want to stay in their graces)” is essentially selfish at root. Additionally, our ethical approach goes beyond any advantage that evolution would dictate as it encourages us to consider the welfare of those who can’t benefit us at all, those outside our tribe.

Our moral intuition is that *we should look after people not according to how much they can benefit us but simply because they’re humans with innate value*. What’s more, we especially consider the weak as more worthy of protection and care. The morality we follow is not just an expression of evolution; it’s not just doing whatever has the most survival value. It’s about valuing the individual, even when he or she is not contributing to the survival of the species. The elderly, the disabled, those on the margins of society.

In this unique train of thought I would imagine how painful it would be to be mugged and how hard it would be for the woman to get back up. And what if she depended on the money in her purse and it was taken from her? So I ask myself, “If I mug her, what will happen to her, and what will happen to the people who depend on her?” All else being equal, I want her to have a good life, so I don’t do it. *That’s an other-regarding ethic*.

While you may not realize it, the idea that other people have innate value separate from their relationship to you and their place in your tribe, first comes from a Judeo-Christian worldview. The entirely unique approach of this worldview that is so ingrained that we now take it for granted is the idea that we should put the other person ahead of ourselves rather than thinking of ourselves first.

Your morals are deeply Christian whether you describe yourself as Christian or not. An ethical system based on honour for one’s built up “tribe” or personal advantage is a *self-regarding ethic*, while one based on “charity” is an *other-regarding ethic*.

The foundation for ethics

Ethics stands for the divide between “right” and “wrong”, it is this reference that helps us to discern whether our behaviour can be justified and therefore guides us on how we ought to live. The principle of ethics establishes the rules, principles, and values on which we *ought* to base our conduct. Now, there’s a key feature here; to many, the word “*ought*” seems demanding, and it’s just that, ethics by definition demands our submission. We ought to live good moral lives, shouldn’t we?

The Judeo-Christian worldview posits that God stands as the divine source of moral reasoning, that ethics are derived from Him. Part of our purpose is to adhere to God’s moral law. *There is a moral fabric to our reality*.

Yet since the 18th century, mankind has been making a gradual shift away from belief in God, so if we’re not going to derive our understanding of goodness from the character and nature of God, then from where? Who, or what ideology, gets to step into God’s empty shoes and define the word “good?” This is assuming that we can really justify that there is such a thing as good and bad without God.

This is not to say unbelievers don't often live good moral lives, in fact, many do, that's not the question. The question is whether we *can really justify true good and bad without reference to God?* We are asking the question about the nature of moral values.

So what new reference defines something as good or bad, and on top of that, by what order do we have an obligation to obey these moral values? For example, we expect a judge to be objective and fair: yet how does a judge actually judge if there are no absolutes by which to do the judging? *Life must have absolutes, even the atheist has to find some point of reference.* If one wants to eliminate God, you're going to have to justify moral standards without God, for without moral standards no society can reasonably last. We are dependent on a moral framework. So, in a world without God, devoid of any transcendent truth, what reference defines good and evil?

Essentially, we are asking what holds moral law in the first place? Law, philosophy, love, education, justice... all rely on moral reasoning which is the discipline under which atheism fails - as we shall see.

Naturalism

Naturalism is a strand of atheistic philosophy that asserts that there is nothing more to reality and our lives than physical laws and forces acting on matter. This natural reality does not find its origin or reason for existence in another but is self-referring: nature is the ultimate and only reality.

Natural science in this view must therefore be the reference for good and evil.

The issue with this is that science is morally neutral: you can't find moral values in a test tube. Science won't tell a scientist whether he or she should be honest about their scientific discoveries. There is no moral dimension in just the natural realm of space, time, matter and energy, where we are ultimately nothing more than a random collocation of atoms, essentially solar dust.

Science does not give us values. Science gives us *what is* and cannot give us *what ought to be the case*. Science itself answers only the 'what' of existence, that of substance and form, not the 'why' of existence. Morality is a 'why' question, it requires meaning and so is unanswerable from only a physical dimension. Science is therefore silent on the subject of ethics for the simple reason that science is descriptive, it explains what is. It is not prescriptive, it does not explain how things ought to be, and so cannot offer an objective view of how we ought to live our lives. Is it therefore any wonder that in this scenario where science is our single vision, existence is the whole circle, and what we believe, our moral values which shape our decisions, are merely a dot on the canvas?

The issue for the naturalist is that since all of reality is entirely physical, morals are not. However, our actions for or against an ethical standard are nonetheless manifested in the physical realm.

So in the naturalistic worldview, our social conventions cannot state something as objectively wrong, just unpopular. Certain actions such as rape or incest may not be biologically or socially advantageous in the course of human development and so would be deemed unfashionable, but that does absolutely nothing to show that rape or incest is objectively wrong. Such behaviour goes on all the time in the animal kingdom. As Charles Darwin said, *"If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering."*

What about evolution, you might ask, doesn't this justify ethics?

If moral values are wholly byproducts of biological evolution, then our moral beliefs will have been selected for their survival value, not whether or not they're truly justified. *Therefore, we may have reason to think our moral intuitions help us survive, but we have no reason to think our moral intuitions are true.* So for those who appeal to so-called "evolutionary ethics", if the reason that human beings are inclined to cooperate is that natural selection worked out that this was a good survival strategy, that doesn't make it good - it just means it works. Calling things like sharing, cooperation, and altruism "moral" or "good" is like my calling a tin opener "moral" or a mousetrap "good." They are no such thing; they are purely functional.

This means that the naturalist cannot make the assertion that we are evolving and progressing to some moral behaviour, for how do you get the word 'progress' in a naturalistic worldview? The word 'progress' smuggles in the idea that you are reaching some objective standard. Naturalism can justify change but it cannot justify an objective grounding for moral truth. This is partly why one of the world's most prominent philosophers, Jurgen Habermas, claimed that secular reason alone cannot account for what he calls "*the substance of the human.*"

The dream of nineteenth-century humanists had been that the decline of religion would lead to less warfare and conflict. In the West, we more often hear about the evils of religion than of Enlightenment secularism, but in fact, enlightenment revolutionaries killed three times as many people in nine months as the Catholic Inquisitions killed in 300 years. The twentieth century was marked by even greater violence, performed by states that were ostensibly non-religious and operating on the basis of secularistic rationality. Open your history books and ask whether secularism in the terrible twentieth century has been a force for good? Not even close to being close.

Continuing along the line of a purely evolutionary mindset, scientific studies suggest there is a link between genetic makeup and various forms of anti-social behaviour. Recent studies, for example, show that a particular receptor gene decreases boys' likelihood to stay in school, even with compensatory support and help from teachers and parents. There are many links of heredity to disease, addictions, and other problematic behaviour. So in a purely naturalistic worldview, it would be perfectly logical to conclude that it would be more socially and economically cost-effective if those genetically prone to nonproductive lives were killed so they did not pass on their genetic code. However, the history of death camps arouses the moral intuition that eugenics, while perhaps scientifically efficient, is evil. Yet if you believe that it is truly wrong, you must find support for your conviction in some source beyond a strictly rational cost-benefit analysis of evolutionary reason.

The naturalistic view of evolution holds that ultimately it's the DNA that is of importance, not the human. The human is reduced to just chemicals where personhood is not given value beyond the material. Evolution prefers the survival of the strong over the weak, and if we really do ultimately march to the drumbeat of evolution alone this ends up very brutal. In a harsh world with finite resources, evolution gives no worth to the weak, physically, mentally, and/or intellectually, and they're assigned to suffer death, destruction and violence. This is good for evolution, so if evolution alone defines morality, then this is indeed really good. Yet this view does not hold up to the moral standards we hold today.

With evolution out the window as a means to justify ethics, what does this leave us with? Well, if we stay within the confines of naturalism (and therefore atheism), it turns out not much at all. If there is no intention to our existence, so that we are simply here as a result of happen-chance, 'inspired' by a mindless nature. Does it really matter whether we survive or not, thrive, fall, live or die, as all ends are equivalent in a purposeless universe?

If nature stands alone without reference to a greater reality, and its origin is self-referring to its own existence, then where does ethics find its grounding? Isn't it all subjective? Think about it: either the

Logos (God) is fundamental to reality, or else particles, energy and fields are. If you start with brute (unconscious) matter and then understand the history of the universe to be how matter came together according to random collisions and the laws of nature to form larger and more complex rearranged groupings of matter, you will end up with (drum roll), you guessed it: mere groupings of rearranged matter. So if consciousness along with ethics were to arise in this naturalistic creation account, it would be a case of getting something from nothing, meaning morals really equate to ultimately *nothing*. I see no way around this. Naturalism's common claim that consciousness is essentially an illusion doesn't easily support the idea that suffering is real and should be avoided.

So there we have it, in the secular view that nature is all that there is, that nature and what is nature explains everything, then moral values become merely a matter of debatable opinion and not subjects of objective truth. Political correctness is the escape clause for the inescapability of value, and so they find a home for morality in politics. *Rights replace right, power replaces freedom, laws become morals, and what is legal becomes what is just.* Atheists share the identical notion of no God and wholly material man, and that has led to the ultimate demise of any moral absolutes and to the place that any political theory can be justified. Man is nothing more than dust in the path of ideological idealism.

Happiness

Where naturalism fails to provide an absolute basis for morality, the secular thinker often adopts the view that happiness can then establish good and evil, in the sense that *"everything about human experience suggests that love is more conducive to human happiness than hate is, therefore we don't need a God to establish a moral law, happiness can define it."*

But if that is so obvious why have we traditionally failed to maintain happiness? We are clearly by nature corrupt and history has proven this. We continue to talk of values and ethics; we persist in establishing moral boundaries but if my happiness is a right and is the ultimate goal of my life, why worry about anyone else's claims to happiness? And if I must worry about someone else's happiness, whose? If life is pointless, why should ethics serve any purpose except my own? If I am just the product of matter, why should I subject myself to anyone else's moral convictions?

A life spent simply searching for happiness may be void of truth and sacrifice. For example, many today spend what seems to be all their spare time plugged into video games or watching TV series, distant from reality but maybe happy. Should we therefore plug into a fake reality? If your primary goal is to be happy in life, then why make sacrifices for others if the cost is your pleasure? The fact that we admire those who lay their lives down to serve others shows us that we know personal happiness is not our greatest good.

Consider this illustration I once read: a young man while waiting for his train realizes he dropped his new phone a few steps back, and it has fallen onto the rail. While he realizes this he also looks forward and sees a young child who has fallen onto the tracks, and a train heading in his direction. He thinks about grabbing the child but realizes if he did that, he won't have enough time to save his phone. Casually he walks back, picks up his phone and the child is scattered and torn apart. The child's family see it happen and start screaming and weeping over their lost child. Afterward the man reasons to himself, *"I know I could have saved the child, but I just got this new phone and have downloaded all my family photos on it. If I lost it, I would have to buy a new one which would mean I wouldn't have the cash for my holiday next month. Also, I would have lost all my contacts. At the end of the day, the child's life is not my responsibility. I am not the child's parent."*

Now if we were to watch the news and saw this in an interview, I am confident we would all be outraged, we would consider this man a senseless monster. Yet in many less privileged places in our

world, about £200 can turn a sickly dying two-year-old into a healthy child, or provide shelter for refugees dying of freezing conditions. What many of us spend on personal luxury and pleasure is far more than enough to save or transform the life of one in a vulnerable situation or in deep poverty, to save a life. The difference is, we don't directly see it (or we even actively refrain from seeing it), and so we excuse our conscience from the responsibility to help. This may not be as direct as the illustration above, but still, we turn a blind eye, plugging into the desire of pleasure and happiness, shutting out the outside world. So you see, a moral law based on personal happiness is by its foundation selfish, it would only be concerned with the relative personal autonomy of that individual, whatever that may be, even if that collides with the happiness of another.

Happiness is a feeling, and feelings fail to provide an objective basis to differentiate between good and bad. We might hear some say, "*if it feels right it is right, if it feels wrong it is wrong.*" The problem is, of course, that our feelings change all the time. And what happens when different people have opposing feelings? In some cultures they love their neighbour, and in other cultures, they burgle and threaten them. You can't make *absolute statements* based on one's personal feelings on a matter, because feelings are personal and subjective.

Extending this claim, if you then argue that morality has been created by man for the *general* happiness of the population, rather than just the *self*, and I ask "*why should I be unselfish?*" And you reply, "*because selfishness is bad for society*", well why should I care what's good for society? And then you will have to say "*because otherwise that's selfish*" - which simply brings us back to where we started. If someone asks what is the point of doing good, it's no good replying "in order to benefit society." All you are really saying is that decent behaviour is decent behaviour. You're also relying on the assumption that society is something good that should therefore be preserved, which is an unjustified moral assumption underneath your attempted moral foundation. You are simply stating that there is a fundamental fixed moral point of reason, an objective point, which naturalism and so atheism insists does not exist.

The conclusion stands that happiness cannot justify an absolute reference for objective morals.

The popular guide to reality and what is considered good in the Western world as a whole is the sensuality of feeling. The ethical answers people now live by are provided by feelings. Our educational institutions now provide little or no intellectual guidance for ethical answers, spreading a bland skepticism that moral values are a purely human construct. They have no knowledge of good and evil to offer the world. Media steps in to fill the vacuum of ethical guidance with suggestions and images that reinforce sensuality as *the* way of life and appeal to feelings and happiness to promote their own agendas.

Pleasure and happiness are good things but they don't define good things. We should care not only about feeling good on the inside but also about the truth and about the impact that our lives have outside of ourselves. The great reformers of history lived troubled lives. Difficult lives. They fought. They wrestled with injustice. They were often ostracized before they were honoured. They sacrificed their happiness to stand up for what's right.

The Christian view, may I note, does not however neglect the deep human desire for happiness. Are there many moments of pleasure in the Christian life? Absolutely. And even better than that there is a deep and steadfast joy that comes from knowing you have a purpose and from always being able to rest in the presence of the One who loves you most.

Yet testing the human spirit, Christianity challenges whether our desire for personal pleasure and happiness can submit to sacrificial love. If you idolise happiness as the guiding force to make your decisions, you will eradicate the hope of being the most noble and characterful being you can be. We

come across innumerable situations when lying or being dishonest will be advantageous for fulfilling momentary desires for the sake of maximizing the amount of happiness we can experience.

So while it has been said that mankind is under the governance of two sovereign masters – pain and pleasure, these counterfeit gods are neither sovereign nor masters. Jesus calls His followers not to the endless, exhaustive pursuit of pleasure, nor to the futile evasion of pain, but to sacrificial love. I have heard the contrast expressed simply and sharply: in a culture that says *“be yourself, look after yourself, express yourself, trust yourself, and treat yourself,”* Jesus said *“deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me,”* knowing that *“if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”*

Happiness does not define morality. And we should be happy about that.

What next?

Tom Bethel noted that *“an article of secular faith is that there is nothing exceptional about human life.”* It’s a difficult statement for the atheist to swallow. Voltaire, a famous philosopher and atheist, found himself realising the sad reality of the atheistic view when he wrote: *“Thus the whole world in every member groans; All born for torment and for mutual death. The universe belies you, and your heart. Refutes a hundred times your mind’s conceit. What is the verdict of the vastest mind? Silence: the book of fate is closed on us.”*

He admitted the pointlessness of life, of everything in the atheistic world, that in the absence of God there is no objective point for moral reasoning or human value. For the atheist, the question *“how and why am I here in the first place”* is answered by saying we are a cosmic accident for whom there is no script for life or preassigned purpose. But let us be absolutely clear: The atheist has placed all other definitions of life’s imperatives on this one hinge, that we exist on this earth and struggle with human personality, morality, and reality without a personal, moral, or even potentially without a real first cause. That’s a leap of faith – to believe that life is ultimately just matter and therefore it doesn’t ultimately matter. If you submit to the first conclusion you are inextricably bound to the rest that follows.

What follows? Well, to put it bluntly, if God doesn’t exist and man is nothing but a purposeless speck of stardust in the grand scheme of chance (and whatever else), *then there is no absolute reference to define good and bad.* Morals don’t really exist nor are they truly justified in a world without God. Our moral experience and so our moral judgements can be considered as simply illusory. Morals are just relative, yet relative to what in a materialistic world? What gives your belief in a certain moral code more authority than someone else’s judgement on morals? What may be morally reasonable in India may not be acceptable in France. What is reasonable in America may be an outrage in Iran. For the Middle Eastern world of Islam, moral truth has been ‘revealed’, for the far eastern world of Hinduism and Buddhism, moral truth is ‘intuitive’, for the western world moral truth is reasoned and for the secularized western man, his own happiness is the moral truth. So what are we left with but confusion?

The major cultural outlook today is that there is no objective moral reality, that what we call “moral absolutes” are only human products, nothing more to knowledge than the “best professional practice”. Moral principles more than all else are taken to be the mere prejudices of certain groups, none of which is superior to any other because without God, we are left to stand on the perspective of the shifting scene of human history, custom and desire. Truth is precious to human life in all of its dimensions, because it alone allows us to come to terms with reality. But in atheism, there are no moral truths.

This is not to say the atheist doesn’t act kindly, or do good deeds, or live with a moral conscience,

just that there can't be any objective reasoning for morality. Why do good? What makes something bad in a meaningless material universe? At bottom, nothing. The operational principle of the natural world is that the strong eat the weak. So if it's natural for the strong to eat the weak, and if we just got here only through the natural, unguided process of evolution, why do we protest when the strong nations start to 'eat' the weak nations? On what basis can we do that? On what basis can we objectively say that genocide in Sudan, in which a strong ethnic group "eats" a weaker one, is wrong? If there is no God, then my views of justice are just my subjective opinions, so how then can we denounce the Nazis for their own (supposedly equally valid) opinions?

This is where it gets scary. Now we may tease ourselves with the question: if morality is not objectively true, what cause is there to keep it? The idea that humanity will remain good when unobserved and unpunished by God begs the question as to why? Why think we have any moral obligation to do anything if morals are merely subjective impressions resulting from evolutionary, societal and parental conditioning? Neither Hitler, Stalin, Mao, the SS, the Gestapo, Nazi doctors nor even the majority of those carrying out the injustices and horrors of the twentieth century believed that God was holding them accountable to absolute justice. This is, after all, the meaning of a secular society.

When it became clear that Nazi Germany would lose the Second World war, and before the war was even lost, one of the senior party officers, confronting the very complicated series of treaty obligations that Germany had accepted in regards to its rule, said out loud, "*what, after all, compels us to keep our promises?*" It is a troubling question, one that illustrates the remarkable moral philosophy the Nazis enjoyed. This is the great consequence of atheism. Without God, we must question if we can reasonably live in the denial of moral truths - in the absence of an objective moral standard. It would be wise to consider the lasting implications of this.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky tried to show that if the existence of God is denied, then one is landed in complete moral relativism, so that no act, regardless of how dreadful or heinous, can be condemned by the atheist. To live consistently with such a view of life is unthinkable and impossible. Hence, atheism is destructive to life and society in general. Dostoyevsky's magnificent novels *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brother Karamazov* powerfully illustrate these themes.

Now, if you take a minute to consider how many millions were killed in the name of nihilistic (and therefore secular) philosophy - Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin were all inspired by it, yet while they are condemned, those atheistic minds who brought the inspiration are left praised. Why is that?

Coming to our senses

I think we know that many of the moral values we hold dear that guide our lives are not just social conventions or merely expressions of personal preference. People are aware that moral values are somehow valid and binding, independent of our opinion, and if they are true and objective to us, there must be a true reference that defines this. For example, to say the holocaust was objectively wrong is to say that it was wrong even though the Nazis who carried it out thought that it was right, and it would still have been wrong even if the Nazis had won the second world war and succeeded in convincing and teaching the world to agree until everyone in our generation believed the holocaust was right.

What I am saying is that intuitively we know objective morals to be the case. An objective moral law entails three specific features. Firstly, they serve as an authoritative guide for actions, regardless of tastes, preferences, desires, self-interest, etc. Secondly, there is a prescriptive obligation that follows from within the system and brings a sense of "oughtness" and of imperatives; it dictates how things should be. Third, morality is universal. Moral principles are not arbitrary and personal but are

public, applying equally to all people in relevantly similar situations. That's what objective moral law entails.

It is not difficult to prove that objective morals exist. In a pluralistic age, students are scared to death of imposing values on someone else. At the same time, certain values have been deeply instilled in them, such as tolerance, being open-minded and accepting, but they defend these views as if they are objectively true. They think it's objectively wrong for someone to impose their values on someone else, therefore our moral experience proves that we do in fact believe in objective moral duties.

Most of us recognise that sexual abuse is wrong. Actions like rape, torture and child abuse aren't just socially unacceptable, they're moral abominations. By the same token, love, generosity and self-sacrifice are truly good. People who don't recognize that are blind. And there's no reason to let their impairment call into question what is clearly evident.

In a discussion where a pastor opens up about helping children who had been abused, a panellist from the show responded with, *"what counts as abuse differs from society to society, so we can't really use the word abuse without trying it to a historical context."* *"Call it what you like"*, the pastor insisted, *"but child abuse is damaging to children. Isn't it wrong to damage children?"* The panellist made no response. Doesn't this reveal the absurdity of such a relativistic worldview?

What do you think of the Hindu practice of suttee (burning widows alive on the funeral pyre of their dead husband) or the ancient Chinese custom of crippling women for life by tightly binding their feet from childbirth, or what about the crusades or the inquisition? Now I can guarantee that most will agree that these are in fact evil, regardless of how one may come to learn about them.

Now when you say it's true there is such a thing as evil, you are saying there's such a thing as good, and by saying this you're saying there is an objective moral law to differentiate between good and evil. When you say there is an objective moral law imposed upon reality, you're saying there is a moral lawgiver. Why? Because morals are a matter of meaning, and meaning requires intention. Therefore, the cause of a universal moral law must be associated with a transcendent conscious mind. So, when you say there is a moral lawgiver, you propose the justification of a transcendent God - a mind who can intend moral standards over the world He created. You are then forced to assume that one part of reality, namely the idea of justice is full of sense and atheism therefore turns out to be too simple. The inexorable tug of goodness and its attractiveness still has an intuitive power over the human heart. This makes atheism not only uneasy in the conscience but untenable in reality. *Some things are good in themselves. Some things are evil in themselves.* Atheism cannot sustain the definitions. Truth matters and is needed.

If you say you don't believe in God but you do believe in moral duties and values like considering every person to have objective value and the requirement to care for the weak and poor, then you are still holding on to Judeo-Christian beliefs, whether or not you admit it. Why, for example, should you look at love and violence - both parts of life, both rooted in our human nature, and then choose one as good and reject one as bad? They are both natural. Where do you get an objective standard to differentiate? If there is no God, no realm above ours, then it does not exist. So when secularists enforce human dignity, rights, and our responsibility to work toward eliminating human suffering, they are indeed exercising religious faith in some kind of transcendent reality. If there is no transcendent reality beyond this life, then there is no real value or meaning for anything. To hold that human beings are the product of nothing but the evolutionary process of the strong eating the weak, but then to insist that nonetheless the strong should not eat the weak because every person has a human dignity to be honoured, is an enormous leap of faith.

Convictions about the value and equality of every person and the importance of loving the weak arose only in a society that believed in a universe with a personal God who made all to have loving communion with Him. Modern secularism has largely maintained these biblical ideas of morality while rejecting the view of the divinely created universe in which those ideals make sense and from which they flowed as natural implications. No one has made this point more forcefully than Friedrich Nietzsche. If there is no God, no supernatural realm, and this material realm is all there is, then there is no transcendent reality beyond this life that can serve as the standard by which to determine what parts of the world are right or wrong. For example, moral evolutions come from a human brain operating in a human culture, processing necessarily limited human experience. Why should your brain stand in judgement over other brains, cultures, and experiences? To simply choose and evaluate one part of life and call it "good" over another we call "bad" is an arbitrary act. So, Nietzsche wrote: *"value judgements concerning life, for or against, can in the last resort never be true."*

A secular worldview leads to the conclusion that morality is an illusion. Therefore, secular reason all by itself, cannot give us a basis for sacrifice, redemption and forgiveness which are in effect the central values of Christianity. The central values of Christianity and secularism are strikingly in conflict with one another. The fact of the matter is, the ideas of freedom, conscience, human rights and democracy are the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. There is no alternative to it. Christianity provides an objective morality that transcends the fickleness of human opinion and the fluidity of human culture, and therefore allows us to call good "good" and to call evil "evil."

Make a decision

If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.

The west is on the verge of collapse at the hands of its own secular intellectuals. It is only a matter of time. The Christian faith brings with it convictions by which to stand and build a moral framework. The secular (and naturalistic) thinker, with their implicitly amoral assumption, imagines that morals have nothing to do with real knowledge per se, but they also think this view can be justifiably sustained. It simply can't. In contrast, reality asserts itself - we know that objective moral values evidently do exist, and therefore we open up the door to God's existence.

Paul the apostle wrote, *"Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right"* (Romans 2:14-15). Later in chapter 14 it then reads, *"So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."*

This is the key point - every atheist is confronted with this basic choice: you may believe there are objective morals but that is incompatible with the atheistic view, therefore **you either need to drop your view there is a true basis for morality, or alternatively, drop atheism.**