

Atheism Cannot Justify Morality

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Editor:

Llewellyn Jones, in his 8/29/96 letter, seems perplexed by my claims that "The atheist worldview insists there are no standards of right or wrong. It says there is no ultimate purpose or meaning. It implies there is no basis for human responsibility. It undermines the very concept of government by law." and that atheism "give license to criminal behavior, drug abuse, and anarchy." Mr. Jones appeals to his own experience that he, presumably as an atheist, knows right from wrong and believes in the validity of the Golden Rule concerning the value of doing good to others.

What Mr. Jones seems to be missing is that as a philosophical framework atheism simply provides no logical basis for any moral standard. As an atheist one could just as well defend a policy of robbery, plunder, and murder. Atheism provides no logical moral restraint to belonging to the Hell's Angels or an urban gang or a guerrilla terrorist group. Marxism-Leninism clearly recognized these implications of atheism and called for a dictatorship of the masses to provide a modicum of social order while reserving to members of the ruling elite the right to rob, plunder, and murder. The former Soviet Union represents a tragic but cogent experimental test of the sociological consequences of atheist philosophy.

Embracing the Golden Rule as an atheist, Mr. Jones is merely borrowing principles from another framework. The notions that there exist transcendent standards of right and wrong or that it is "good" to value fellow human beings do not inherently belong to the atheist worldview, a worldview which asserts that there is no God, that ultimate reality resides in the elementary particles of physics, and that people are nothing but the product of impersonal random processes. Such propositions about right and wrong and valuing others instead flow historically and logically from a worldview that recognizes a transcendent, personal, creator God.

But Mr. Jones is surely correct that as an atheist he can choose to adopt some of these principles and that they operate effectively for his and he does

not suffer pangs of serious mental conflict in doing so. The reason is that in reality we as human beings are more than a collection of elementary particles. We indeed are spiritual beings made originally in the image of a personal God. We experience a built-in resonance with these transcendent principles because of who we are.

Mr. Jones inquires as a scientist what the God I allude to is like. A quick answer is that He is the same as described by such more eminent scientists than myself such as Johannes Kepler, Blaise Pascal, Isaac Newton, James Clerk Maxwell, and Lord Kelvin and more notable men of history such as Daniel Webster, John Adams, John Witherspoon, John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, St. Augustine, the apostle Paul, the apostle John, the apostle Peter, Zechariah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, David, Samuel, Joshua, Moses, Abraham, and Noah. And, yes, the Bible is the special place where this God is revealed and can be discovered. Indeed no greater discovery is possible.

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