



What I Would Say to an Atheist Part 3

Where Do You Get Your Morals?

There were two studies done in the field of social psychology more than fifty years ago that were stunning in the implications that could be drawn from them. The first entailed researchers placing lifelike rubber turtles and snakes in a road and filming how motorists responded to them. They were stunned by how many drivers intentionally rode over both the turtles and snakes. The snakes and turtles were then placed on the side of the road and an astounding number of motorists swerved off the road just to hit the rubber turtles and snakes. The famous Milgram study involved having subjects sit at a table outside what they thought was a testing room. They were told that they were using punishment, though the use of electric shocks to help students learn vocabulary words. If the person in the other room got the wrong answer, the subject was to administer what he thought was a shock to the student. It was astonishing how many of the subjects actually pressed the button to give what they believed were near lethal electric shocks to the students they thought they were training. Many of the subjects showed outward signs of great stress at what they supposed was the pain they were inflicting on the other person: sweating, biting their lips, groaning, and nervous laughing. Yet they still kept increasing the level of shocks. A whopping 65% of the subjects were willing to administer what they understood to be life threatening shocks when they thought the students had made too many mistakes.

These subjects in both experiments were not strange or creepy people. They were like you and me, normal individuals who acted cruelly. Of course nothing or no one was actually hurt in the experiment...at least physically, but the subjects thought they were hurting and even perhaps killing either animals or fellow human beings and their values or morals did not hold them back. If you were to try to come up with the chief moral principle of Darwinian atheist ethics, would it not be "survival of the fittest"? In a purely mechanical and random based universe that has no God, all that really matters is survival, pleasure and getting ahead. Every other value is secondary. Morals are relative to circumstances and situations, and not based on any ultimate standard. Of course, in an evolutionary, atheist world view, there is no ultimate authority determining what is right or wrong except maybe your own or someone with near total power making the rules. The numbers are staggering when we see evolutionary, atheist national governments in place. More than 60 million people of their own citizens have been murdered by the atheist governments of Russia, China, Cuba, North Korea, and Cambodia in the past hundred years. This does not include what Nazi Germany and its atheist agenda unleashed on Europe in its effort to destroy religious life and culture.

It is not the art or technology of a people that determine what life is like for them but rather the morals that shape it most. Morals provide the framework for relationships, values, and behavior. We now are speaking of true morals; not what one espouses but those that decide how one actually lives. If survival of the fittest is the over-arching principle underlying how you see life and what matters most, then you behave in that manner. It is what marks your approach to others. Who is the fittest? Who should get ahead? Who has value and worth? Very few people, especially those in power see themselves as not of great worth, of importance. That is what made Josef Stalin and Chairman Mao so effective in consolidating power and destroying their perceived enemies. They could do no wrong. They were the best of the best in their eyes and most fit to lead and wield power. All opposition to their fitness and "greatness" had to be destroyed to protect the world from losing them. If it is just fitness that determines value, then it is always a personal judgment call on how

someone should be treated. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the dilemma for the Samaritan, if he lived by the value of survival of the fittest would have been, "Was the mugged and badly beaten Jew worth saving?"

Christianity, at least as Jesus presented it, has two great values or moral statements, "Love God with all you possess" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Let us just take this second moral statement and examine it. I cannot say all Christians live by it and certainly it does not decide how all Christians interact with others just like I would have to admit that not all evolutionary atheists live by the rule of survival of the fittest. However, "Love your neighbor as yourself is the framework behind the true Christian lifestyle and it is quite different from survival of the fittest. One leading atheist who is known for his many public debates with Christians called this value "unreasonably opposed to human nature". But only if there is no God in human nature! There are three basic ways "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself" plays out as a way of life.

First, you protect the weak. The Psalmist states this emphatically. **Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.** (Psalm 82:3-4 NIV) This mindset was clearly illustrated by Jesus who when brought a woman caught in the act of adultery was expected by the crowd to render judgment upon her. Vulnerable, humiliated and perhaps even full of guilt, Jesus easily could have won the respect of the crowd by condemning her and yet he did not. He told them that if any of them there were sinless, that person could be the first to start the execution of her by stoning. None of those gawkers of course were without sin and so like a handful of water slipping between the fingers, the group disappeared. Weak and vulnerable without a single advocate, the woman found out just how valuable and lovely defense of the weak was. Jesus invited himself over to the house of the despised tax collector Zacchaeus because the guy needed a friend. Paul the Apostle put this aspect of love your neighbor as yourself perfectly. **And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.** (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 NIV)

Second, keep your word, even if it hurts. Moses voiced the command of God in this matter. **When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.** (Numbers 30:2 NIV) The lack of honesty and integrity is crippling to a society and to families. Without honesty, trust is eroded, and you cannot count on any promise made to you. Sometimes it is painful to keep your word. A restaurant is more expensive than you planned. It is inconvenient to give your daughter a ride. A marriage is hard to save. The Bible tells of a group of people called the Gibeonites who were living among the Israelites. A treaty had been made by the Israelite leadership to protect the Gibeonites but then the armies of five city states came and surrounded the Gibeonites. They sent word to the Israelites of their terrible danger. The Israeli leadership did not need the Gibeonites. In fact it was kind of a hassle having them living in the middle of their nation. But because of their word, they went and fought against the invading armies. Love is at the foundation of honesty and integrity. The Apostle Paul had this to say about being truthful. **Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.** (Ephesians 4:25 NIV)

A third aspect of the morality of love is the willingness to lay down one's life for others. Self-sacrifice is at the heart of love and although it is not sensible or maybe not even desirable, it is what empowers love, what gives it real lasting strength. Jesus stated the depths of love when He noted, **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.** (John 15:13 NIV) A rational evolutionary atheist would call this an irrational standard. There are many ways to lay down your life for others. You can of course actually die to protect someone from danger. My brother has risked his life many times in his work as a police officer to save those he did not know. Firemen stream into burning buildings to save people trapped inside. Yet a mother who quits her job to be a stay at home mom is laying down her life for love. A grandfather who volunteers to tutor at risk kids is laying down his life for love. A doctor who gives up a lucrative career to provide medical

care to lepers in a third world country is laying down her life for love. A student who befriends an unliked classmate is laying down his life for love.

There is no greater force working in the universe than love. Without God, it could not exist. Friendships would fall apart. Partnerships would eventually collapse. Relationships in a godless world can never get past survival of the fittest. But because God fills the universe and He is love, we see love in action every day. We may not understand it just like physicists cannot understand energy but when we see it, we know what it is. All else may fail in your life but if you love, you have God to thank and something in you that will last forever. You may not believe in God yet...but if you believe in love, you are on the right track. This universe will not last. Your physical body in this state will not last. But you will. The Bible makes that clear. God lasts. Finally, love lasts. **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.** (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV)