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The "Secular 10 Commandments" and the Fallacy of Atheist Ethics- Part 2

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In the first installment of this two part article, we reported that last year two American Atheists conducted a contest asking secularists to submit suggestions for a set of "Secular 10 Commandments." The Atheists, Lex Bayer and John Figdor (the "humanist chaplain" at Stanford University), selected the ten best ideas and published them in a book titled *Atheist Mind, Humanist Heart: Rewriting the Ten Commandments for the Twenty-first Century* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014).

The two authors' believe secular moral principles are better than the Ten Commandments given to Moses (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:4-21). They contend a secular code of conduct is based on reason and science.

Here are the ten principles Bayer and Figdor selected for their book (as listed by the Christian Post online):

1. Be open-minded and be willing to alter your beliefs with new evidence.
2. Strive to understand what is most likely to be true, not to believe what you wish to be true.
3. The scientific method is the most reliable way of understanding the natural world.
4. Every person has the right to control of their body.
5. God is not necessary to be a good person or to live a full and meaningful life.
6. Be mindful of the consequences of all your actions and recognize that you must take responsibility for them.

7. Treat others as you would want them to treat you, and can reasonably expect them to want to be treated; think about their perspective.
8. We have the responsibility to consider others, including future generations.
9. There is no one right way to live.
10. Leave the world a better place than you found it.

As we pointed out in part one, these principles sound good and reasonable, but are based on fallacious presuppositions. With no sort of absolute basis (God) there is simply no reason why anyone should voluntarily be obliged to follow any of the principles. Only if the government, or some other controlling human entity, has the power to enforce these ideas would anyone feel compelled to adopt them as his or her personal ethical code.

Only a divinely ordained set of normative principles can truly motivate a person to obey their precepts. Why? Because only an infinite and eternal deity is capable of establishing absolute standards of right and wrong. In part one, we analyzed "commandments" one through five (see: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2015/01/the-secular-10-commandments-and-the-fallacy-of-atheist-ethics-part-1/>). In this installment we will examine numbers six through ten.

6. Be mindful of the consequences of all your actions and recognize that you must take responsibility for them.

As Christians, we certainly agree with this principle. People are responsible for their choices and actions. Part of our nature as humans made in the image of

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God is that we have a moral sense and the ability to know and choose right and wrong.

The problem for the Atheist is that he wants to assume humans possess the ability to make moral choices. However, his naturalistic worldview, in fact, negates that assumption – a fact he will not concede in most cases. If Atheism is true, then we cannot say we actually choose anything or that anything is right or wrong. We are just pawns in the hands of blind fate and the inflexible laws of nature. We may think we are choosing something, but in reality, we are just doing what the natural circumstances require. In other words, free will is nothing more than an illusion. The choices we make are determined by our genetic makeup and the environment. Even our thoughts and emotions (egs.: love and hate) are determined by the effects of genes and environmental forces on the neurons in our brains.

If true, this obviously presents a number of serious dilemmas for society. For instance, our legal system is predicated on the assumption that people can choose to do the things they do. However, if behavior is predetermined and free will is an illusion, then how can we hold a criminal responsible for his crime. He was only doing what he was destined to do. People only do what they are programmed to do.

As this shows, most Atheists and secularists do not take their own presuppositions to their logical conclusions. Some mendacious secularists who understand these problems of logic purposely either ignore them or don't like to talk about them. They don't want their uninformed constituents to question the validity of their secular axioms so they will not have to defend their views logically. That's why they of-

ten focus their appeal on people's emotions. Sadly, most people today make decisions on how it feels rather than on reasonable deduction. ("It just feels so right." Or, "I've got a bad feeling about this.")

7. Treat others as you would want them to treat you, and can reasonably expect them to want to be treated; think about their perspective.

This statement is essentially a secular version of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Jesus said something similar when He declared the second most important commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). It is a wonderful principle. Once again, however, the Atheist provides no ultimate reason to obey it. Without a transcendent basis for doing good the word itself is meaningless. Likewise, if humans have no divine accountability and have no divinely imbued value, then no one need care how she treats others or to consider their perspective. How she treats others will only be determined by how she perceives it to be in her own best interest. Values such as self-sacrifice no longer have meaning. As Atheist Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* author, honestly advocated: "If any civilization is to survive, it is the morality of altruism that men have to reject."

8. We have the responsibility to consider others, including future generations.

Once again, we like this principle. Certainly we want to be mindful of others and future generations. Nonetheless, the real issue is, again, WHY? As we said earlier, the fallacy of secular humanism is not just what it advocates, which in many cases is agreeable to Christian ethics, it is WHY it advocates them. Secular humanism and other Atheist ethical systems have no foundation upon which they are built. They rely entirely on human intuition, science, and reason to establish their

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principles. Yet all of those sources are fallible and ever changing and can establish no absolute and enduring moral values.

9. There is no one right way to live.

This is the primary moral presupposition of our generation. It is the heart and soul of Postmodernism and Multiculturalism. The idea is that no one has the right to tell another person how to live. No religion is better than any other. No culture is superior to any other. No moral code is superior to any other. No economic system is better than any other. No political system is better than any other. No one's truth is better than anyone else's truth. No sexual behavior or orientation is better than any other. It's just, "Live and let live." (Sometimes they add, "As long as you don't hurt anyone.")

In this milieu, the only thing considered wrong is to tell someone else they are wrong. The problem with this principle is that it is logically self-refuting. You cannot say it is wrong to say something is wrong without negating your own statement.

Back in the 1990s, promoters of the New Age Movement fad used to conduct elaborate trade Fairs and Festivals around the country drawing thousands. Hundreds of various New Age vendors rented exhibit space where they pitched their metaphysical ideas and hawked their books and wares (all for a price, of course). At several of those Fairs, the mission organization where I then worked rented space where we gave away free Bibles and distributed evangelistic Christian literature. On one occasion, one of my colleagues was confronted by an angry woman who protested our presence at the event. She said we had no business being there telling people that Jesus was the only way to be saved. "You have no right to tell anyone they are wrong!" she angrily asserted. My as-

sociate looked at her and calmly asked, "Are you saying we are wrong?" She just stood and looked at him unable to respond. (I think she was really upset because she thought we were trying to cut in on her business, which we were.)

At some point, absolute values exist. Some things are right and some things are wrong. As Christians we affirm the Bible as our ultimate standard. We also affirm the uniqueness of Christ and the Christian faith. Simply put, not all worldviews are equal. If someone protests saying, "There are no absolutes," you might ask, "Are you absolutely sure?"

That being said, many of the choices we make involve fluctuating cultural norms such as clothing styles, music styles, hair styles, etc. Nonetheless, some principles and boundaries are universal in their scope – such as, Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). So, at least to that degree, there is only one right way to live (and die).

10. Leave the world a better place than you found it.

Who can argue with this statement? We all want to leave the world better for our children and their children. The problem is determining exactly what makes the world better. The term "better" suggests we can establish something as "good" and then improve upon it. But, as we have shown, relativistic secular ethics can make no definitive statement about what is good. Without an absolute standard, "good," "better," and "best" mean whatever anyone thinks, feels, or wants them to mean.

For instance, I am sure if we interviewed a committed Muslim, he would say the way to leave the world a better place is to convert as many people as possible to Islam. In the case of many Muslims, converting everyone to Islam should be accom-

plished by any method possible – including threatening or killing unbelievers. The same can be said of adherents to other fanatical ideologies who are convinced the end justifies the means. Nazis believed the way to leave the world a better place was rid it of all Jews. Communists believe only a violent revolution can improve the future world. Those may be extreme examples, but they illustrate the paradoxical and incoherent nature of secular ethics.

As Christians, we define what is "good" or "better" as what is consistent with the will of God as revealed in the Bible and demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ. Our goal, then, is to make the world a better place by living as much as humanly possible according to godly standards. That would include helping people in need, healing the sick, working for peace and justice, etc. Granted, we also want to convert as many people as possible to our faith. But unlike radical Muslims, we do not believe all methods are legitimate to do so. In fact, to force or coerce people to become Christians is in direct contradiction to Jesus' and the Bible's principles of evangelism. A forced conversion is no conversion at all.

Conclusion

So there you have them, The Secular Ten Commandments. Most (but not all) of them are common-sense principles for people to affirm and follow. But, as we have shown, the fallacy of secular ethics is not so much what they are, but what lies at their foundation. In the case of the Atheist, and he will have to admit this if he is honest, there is simply nothing at the base of his moral code. What is true today, is false tomorrow. What is good today is bad tomorrow. What is right today is wrong tomorrow. It is a house built on shifting sand (Matt. 7:25).

Christian ethics are based on the nature of the Infinite and Eternal God as revealed to us in His Word, the Bible, and in Jesus Christ, God incarnate. All Christian moral principles are built on that unshakable and unchanging foundation. What is true today, is true tomorrow. What is good today is good tomorrow. What is right today is right tomorrow. That truly is the rock that cannot be moved (Matt. 7:26-27).

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