

## Morality and the Irrationality of an Evolutionary Worldview

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Morality is a very difficult problem for the evolutionary worldview. This is not to say that evolutionists are somehow less moral than biblical creationists—or anyone else. Most evolutionists adhere to a moral code and believe in the concept of right and wrong. But evolutionists have no rational reason for this position. Thus, only creationists have a rational, logical, and consistent reason for morality.

### The Foundation of Morality

Even though most people do not acknowledge it, the morality and rules that most humans adhere to have their basis in the Bible, specifically in the literal history of Genesis. The Bible claims to be the revealed Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) and that the biblical God is the ultimate authority and foundation for knowledge (Hebrews 6:13; Proverbs 1:7, 2:6; Colossians 2:3). The Bible tells us that God is the Creator of all things and, therefore, all things belong to Him (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1). Thus, God as the Creator has the right to define absolute standards of behavior.

Apart from biblical creation, morality has no justification. Christian philosopher Dr. Greg Bahnsen (1948–1995) states, “What does the unbeliever [person who rejects the biblical God] mean by ‘good,’ or by what standard does the unbeliever determine what counts as ‘good’ (so that ‘evil’ is accordingly defined or identified)? What are the presuppositions in terms of which the unbeliever makes any moral judgments whatsoever?”<sup>1</sup> Although unbelievers may classify actions as good or evil, they do not have an ultimate foundation for defining what is good and evil.

In fact, many evolutionists are quite clear that evolution does not provide a basis for morality. William Provine, evolutionist and biology professor at Cornell University, states in referring to the implications of Darwinism, “No ultimate foundations for ethics exist, no ultimate meaning in life exists, and free will is merely a human myth.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, if evolution is true, then there can be no universal moral code that all people should adhere to.

And Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg, evolutionist and physics professor at the University of Texas, states, “I think that part of the historical mission of science has been to teach us that we are not the playthings of supernatural intervention, that we can make our own way in the universe, and that we have to find our own sense of morality.”<sup>3</sup> Again, if morality is determined by our own sense, then a universal moral code that all people should follow cannot be justified.

### Why Murder is Wrong

Murder is an obvious example of immoral behavior. The basis for this comes from Genesis 1:27 which states that human beings are made in God’s image and are different from the animals. Murder is condemned in Genesis 4 where God punishes the first murderer, Cain, for killing his brother Abel. God’s condemnation of murder is further established in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13). Death and suffering were not part of God’s original creation as exhibited by God’s command to Adam and Eve and the animals to eat only plants (Genesis 1:29–30). God states in Genesis 1:31 that His creation was “very good.” This terminology is meaningless if it includes death and suffering.

Evolutionists might say that standards of right and wrong can be created apart from God. However, this thinking is arbitrary and will lead to absurd conclusions. If everyone can create his or her own morality, then no one can judge the morality of others. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin chose a moral code in which murder was perfectly acceptable.

This might seem upsetting to us, but how could we argue that it is wrong for others to murder if morality is determined by our “own sense” and “no ultimate foundation for ethics” exists?

Moral outrage simply does not make sense in an evolutionary universe. Bahnsen states, “Such indignation requires recourse to the absolute, unchanging, and good character of God in order to make philosophical sense.”<sup>4</sup>

### Majority Rule or God's Rules?

Some evolutionists have claimed that morality is what the majority decides it to be. This shifts an unjustified opinion from one person to a group of people; it is arbitrary and leads to absurd conclusions. Bahnsen writes:

Perhaps the unbeliever takes “good” to be whatever evokes public approval. However, on that basis the statement, “The vast majority of the community heartily approved of and willingly joined in the evil deed,” could never make sense. The fact that a large number of people feel a certain way does not (or should not rationally) convince anybody that this feeling (about the goodness or evil of something) is correct.<sup>5</sup>

Hitler was able to convince a majority of his people that his actions were right, but that does not really make them right.

Without the biblical God and literal Genesis, right and wrong become personal preferences such that “murder is wrong” is equivalent to “blue is my favorite color.” Both are personal opinions and provide no basis for arguing with someone who has a different opinion.

But the question, logically speaking, is how the unbeliever can make sense of taking evil seriously—not simply as something inconvenient, or unpleasant, or contrary to his or her desires. What philosophy of value or morality can the unbeliever offer which will render it meaningful to condemn some atrocity as objectively evil? The moral indignation which is expressed by unbelievers when they encounter the wicked things which transpire in this world does not comport with theories of ethics which unbelievers espouse, theories which prove to be arbitrary or subjective or merely utilitarian or relativistic in character. On the unbeliever’s worldview, there is no good reason for saying that anything is evil in nature, but only by personal choice or feeling.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, when evolutionists talk about morality as if it is a real standard, they are being inconsistent with their own worldview.

Genesis not only justifies the existence of the moral code, but also explains people’s inability to fully live up to that same code. The first violation of the moral code by humanity was Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:17; 3:6). The Bible teaches that the rebellious (sinful) nature is inherited; it is passed from parents to descendants. Thus, all people have in their nature a tendency to sin (a tendency to rebel against God) because they are descendants of Adam and Eve who committed the first sin (Romans 5:12; Galatians 5:17). Adam’s sin resulted in the curse of all things and all creation has been suffering the effects of the curse since that time (Romans 8:22–23). Thus, a literal Genesis can account for why people are immoral in the first place as well as the “natural evils” we see in the world.

A Christian worldview regarding Genesis as literal history is necessary for understanding (1) why there is a moral code; (2) why everyone knows about it; and (3) why no one can live up to it completely. This provides a rational, logical, and consistent foundation for morality that has led to modern laws that prohibit and punish immorality.

### Inconsistency in the Evolutionary Worldview

Consider those evolutionists who are concerned about children being taught creation. The well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, professor at Oxford University, states concerning teaching creation in schools, “Evolution is supported by mountains of scientific evidence. These children are being deliberately and wantonly misled (about the origins of living things).”<sup>7</sup>

It is commendable that Dawkins is concerned about the welfare of children: that they should only be taught the truth. But does such concern make sense if children are simply the result of random evolutionary processes?

Dawkins argues that creation should not be taught since he believes it is false. Now, this begs the question, since the truth or falsity of creation is the issue: as biblical creationists we are convinced that creation is true, and evolution is false. But the truly absurd thing about such evolutionary arguments is that they are contrary to evolution! That is, in an evolutionary worldview why is it wrong to lie—particularly if it benefits our survival value?

Now, certainly in a Christian worldview it is wrong to lie, and the Christian has a reason for this. God has indicated in His Word that lying is contrary to His nature (Numbers 23:19) and that people are not to engage in it (Exodus 20:16). But apart from the Christian worldview, why should people tell the truth? For that matter, why should people do anything at all? Words like should and ought only make sense if there is an absolute standard given by one who has authority over everyone.

If human beings are merely the inevitable result of the laws of physics and chemistry acting over time, then

how can people have any genuine choice in what they do? If the decisions people make are simply the deterministic outworking of electrochemical reactions in a brain—which is itself allegedly the mindless outworking of billions of random chance copying errors in our DNA—then how would it make sense to hold people responsible for their “decisions”?

After all, we do not attempt to punish the planet Venus for spinning backwards. And we do not get angry at baking soda for reacting with vinegar. This is just what necessarily happens in the universe given the laws of nature. So why would an evolutionist be angry at anything one human being does to another (such as creationists supposedly “lying” to children), if we are all nothing more than complex chemical reactions? If we are simply evolved animals, why should we hold to a code of conduct in this “dog-eat-dog” world? After all, what one animal does to another is morally irrelevant.

### **The Evolutionary Worldview Borrows from the Christian Worldview**

When evolutionists attempt to be moral, they are “borrowing” from the Christian worldview.

The Christian worldview accounts not only for morality but also for why evolutionists behave the way they do. Even those who have no basis for morality within their own professed worldview nonetheless hold to a moral code; this is because in their heart of hearts they really do know the God of creation, despite their profession to the contrary. Scripture tells us that everyone knows the biblical God, but that they suppress the truth about God (Romans 1:18–21).

Why would anyone do this?

We have an inherited sin nature from Adam (Romans 5:12) who rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden. John 3:19 indicates that people would rather remain in spiritual darkness than have their evil deeds exposed. Just as Adam tried to hide from God’s presence (Genesis 3:8), so his descendants do the same. But the solution to sin is not suppression; it is confession and repentance (1 John 1:9). Christ is faithful to forgive anyone who calls on His name (Romans 10:13).

Nearly everyone believes that people ought to behave in a certain way: that there is a moral code. Yet, in order for morality to be meaningful, the Bible and a literal Genesis must be true. Since God created human beings, He determines what is right and wrong, and we are responsible to Him for our actions.

We must, therefore, conclude that evolutionists are being inconsistent (irrational) when they talk about right and wrong, since such concepts are meaningless within their professed worldview. Like so many things that we often take for granted, the existence of morality confirms that biblical creation is true.

### **Rationally Resolving the Debate**

Evolutionists and creationists have a different ultimate standard by which they evaluate and interpret physical evidence such as stars, fossils, and DNA.

The biblical creationist takes the Bible as the ultimate standard—an approach which the Bible itself endorses (Proverbs 1:7; Hebrews 6:13). The evolutionist embraces a competing philosophy instead, such as naturalism (the belief that natural causes and laws can explain all phenomena) or empiricism (the belief that experience, especially of the senses, is the source of all knowledge).

How then can people rationally decide which ultimate standard is correct, since each camp interprets all evidence in light of his or her ultimate standard?

In this article, we have employed a “transcendental argument”—an approach that demonstrates the truth of a foundational claim by showing the impossibility of the contrary. In effect, we show the truth of the biblical creation worldview by showing that the alternative is self-defeating. Alternatives to biblical creation undermine human experience and reasoning because such worldviews on their own terms cannot account for the things we take for granted in a consistent and justified way.

We used morality as a particular illustration of the transcendental argument (i.e., morality only makes sense if biblical creation is true). But we could equally well have used other things that people take for granted such as laws of logic, uniformity, and science, reliability of senses and memory, human dignity and freedom. Such foundational truths only make sense in a biblical creation worldview.

Christian philosopher and theologian Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987) argued that the God of biblical creation is essential to rationality. He states, “I hold that belief in God is not merely as reasonable as other belief, or even a little or infinitely more probably true than other belief; I hold rather that unless you believe in God you can logically believe in nothing else.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Footnotes**

1. Bahnsen, G., 1996. *Always ready*, R. Booth (ed.), p. 168. Covenant Media Press: Nacogdoches, Texas.

2. Provine, W.B., and P.E. Johnson, 1994. Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy? *Origins Research* **16**(1).
3. Interview with Steven Weinberg (PBS). Retrieved from, <http://www.counterbalance.net/transcript/wein-frame.html>.
4. Bahnsen, Ref. 1, p. 170.
5. Bahnsen, Ref. 1, p. 168.
6. Bahnsen, Ref. 1, pp. 169–170.
7. *Ekklesia*, April 29, 2003. Darwin attacks creationist plans on theology and politics from a christian perspective. Retrieved from, [http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news\\_syndication/article\\_2003\\_04\\_29\\_dawkins.shtml](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_2003_04_29_dawkins.shtml)
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