

Humanism's Search For Morality: Situation Ethics

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Humanism Is Not New: "Humanism traces its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to the scientific revolution of the modern world." Humanist Manifesto I. Humanists claim to be intellectually and morally superior to their counterpart, those that believe in God and the Bible. One area they point to is morality and their standard which is situation ethics.

I) What Is Moral?

A) Defining terms

1. Morality -- Latin *mores*, meaning habits or customs. Morality is the character of being in accord with the principles or standards of right conduct.
2. Ethics - Greek word meaning character. Ethics deals with how we ought to behave.

B) What is morally ethical?

1. The believer in God will point to the Bible as the standard of what is right and wrong.

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

- a. Therefore we are to obey God and His word.
- b. To not do so is to sin against God and often one's fellowman.
2. The Humanist says there is no set standard but there is morality. It is religion that is really immoral because it seeks to apply a

single standard to everyone in all situations. For instance, you shall not lie, you shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery, etc.

C) The Immorality of Religion?

1. Religious people often do bad things in the name of religion.
2. Religious people then turn to God and says it is His fault. He made us this way.
3. Predestination says that everything we do has been predetermined by God. Therefore, we are not responsible for our actions.
 - a. *"God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. iii, sec.1.
 - b. *"By this sin (eating the forbidden fruit) they (our first parents) fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. ...From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions" ."* Presbyterian Confession of Faith

D) Answers to the above

1. "Religious people can do wrong, and are condemned for their hypocrisy. ,

Romans 2:21 *You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?*

2. Each of us has the ability to choose for ourselves what we will

and will not do are free moral agents, **Genesis 4** with Cain,

Joshua 24:15 *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

3. Each of us is called upon to believe, confess Jesus, repent of our sins, and be baptized; these are decisions we are to make.

II) Humanism's Big Question: Why bother?

A) Why be concerned at all with morality and ethics?

1. "We have some consciousness about making choices, and out of that consciousness also comes responsibility for making the best choice possible." Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.
2. Big question is "Why bother to be good?"
3. Possible reasons:
 - a. "Ethics is a natural phenomenon, even though it often doesn't look like it's a common one." (just because)
 - b. "these help our ancestors to live successfully" (survival)
 - c. "Ethics may be a part of the evolutionary process." (evolution)
 - d. "And here is the core of humanist ethics; the preservation, or even more strongly the nurturance, of human dignity and worth."
 - e. "Act so as to elicit the best in others, and thereby in yourself." (The Golden Rule)." Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.
 - f. "I've also answered that it may be human instinct. We appear to have an inborn sense that tells us that right is

better than wrong, a sense that often helps us move beyond our narrow, immediate self interest." ." Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.

g. "We learn to do without the 'why.'" Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.

4. There really is no answer! "We never know for certain that our 'bothering' to be good will be worthwhile." ." Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.

a. "It may be that all of our 'bothering' to be good has little effect. What we do know is that choosing not to bother will also have an effect. "

b. "Why bother to be good? Because only by trying will we know if it's worth it." Humanists and Global Ethics -- Humanism Today, Volume 12.

B) Some humanists point out that there is no real standard of morality but man still has that sense and needs to have it.

1. George Gaylord Simpson, evolutionist at Harvard , "man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind, nonetheless good and evil, right and wrong, concepts irrelevant in nature except from the human viewpoint, become real and pressing features of the whole cosmos as viewed by Man -- the only possible way in which the cosmos can be viewed morally because morals arise only in man" An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, page 346

2. "No sane person will argue that absolutely 'anything goes'. The expressions 'ought' and 'ought not' are as much a part of the atheist's vocabulary as anyone else's." page 320

III) Humanist Standard is Situation Ethics

A) "Situation Ethics" becomes the standard of what one ought or ought not do.

1. "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human

experience. Ethics is **autonomous** and **situational**, needing no theological or ideological sanction." Humanist Manifesto II, page 17.

2. ***Judges 21.25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes***
 - a. Autonomous means independent and self governing. What is right for one person may not be right for another person. We cannot tell anyone they are wrong for that would require my value judgment to be placed on another person.
 - b. Situational means what is normally considered wrong may be right under different circumstances. Therefore, morality is always changing from person to person and from situation to situation.
 - i. Murder is right in certain circumstances -- keep in mind that murder is the taking of innocent life.
 - ii. Homosexuality, incest, adultery, all can be justified.
 - c. No one can say you are wrong even if they believe you are wrong because they are not you.

B) Let us not drink from the waters of situation ethics

1. There is never a situation where it is OK or right to take the life of an innocent person, practice homosexuality, commit adultery, slander another person, lie, cheat, steal, etc.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

2. Abraham lied:

Genesis 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. 12 "Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

13 *"Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."*

- a. What had Abraham done to Sarah?

Genesis 12:15 *The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house,*

- i. he abandoned her.
- b. Abraham was gaining from his lie,

Genesis 12:16 *He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.*

- c. Abraham was not trusting in God and was not going along with God's purpose,

Genesis 12:17 *But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.*

- d. Abraham cast doubt on all believers in God,

Genesis 12:18 *And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 "Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way."*

- e. The unbeliever had better morals than the believer,

Genesis 12:20 *So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.*

- 3. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph,

Genesis 39:9 *"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

- a. You cannot sin in a right way.
- b. You cannot find a situation where God approves of your sin,

Ezekiel 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

4. The Law of God is for our good and happiness,

Deuteronomy 6:24 'And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.

5. This sense of right and wrong is not the process of evolution but man being made in the image of God.

Romans 2:13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; **14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, **15** who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Conclusion:

The very foundation of situation ethics is evolution. If man is just an animal, then there is no real standard and reason for being morally good. If God created man, then He is our reason for being and living, **Ecclesiastes 3:11** **He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.** The atheist prayer: "O God, if there is a God, save my soul if I have a soul." Where is the hope where is the reason? I do not believe in the logic that says you need to do what the Bible says just in case it is right. But consider this, no one will ever be disappointed that has lived their life according to God's word after they die. If the atheist is right then he won't feel anything at all. If he is wrong, he will know the flames of hell. If the believer in God is wrong, he won't feel anything, if he is right, he will have the reward of heaven. The truth is a person living by God's word without confidence and conviction will also be lost. **Hebrews 11:6** **But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.** I ask no one to hedge their bets but to study and weigh the evidence.