

## Without God, everything is permitted

Dostoevsky

Where does our sense of right or wrong, good and evil come from?

From the earliest recorded history life on earth has been determined by contests between the gods. To make sure humankind benefited from the pleasure of these gods they kept certain rules, offered sacrifices and abstained from behaviour they thought would be displeasing.

The God we worship demands that we honour only him, there is no god before Him, he is Almighty and alone to be worshiped.

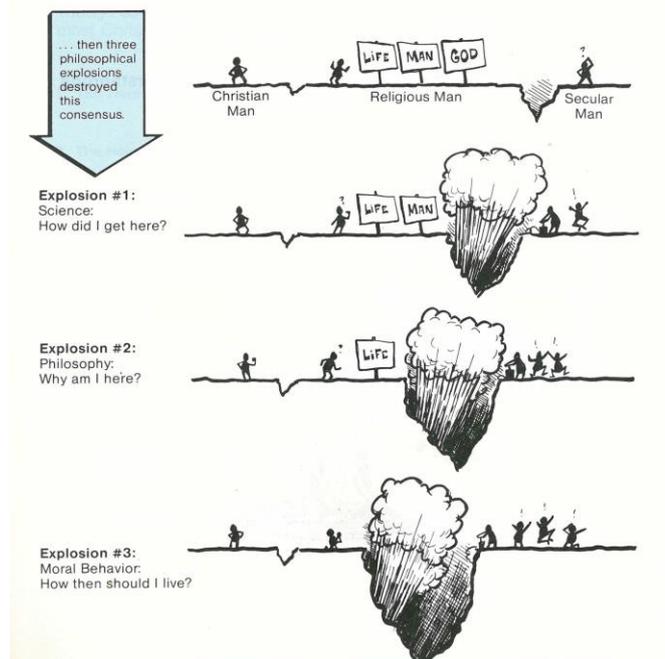
He has established a covenant with his people, a promise that he would bless them eternally in return for their love and obedience. This covenant was first established in the garden

Genesis 1:26-31 outlines the first responsibilities man and woman had to their creator. In chapter 2 he confronted them with their first moral choice, whether to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or not. They made a wrong choice and from there flows the story of God's plan of redemption.

Western history shows that until a few hundred years before the birth of Christ that a world view that accepted a transcendent God with authority to decide what was good and evil generally prevailed.

Socrates and his students, Plato and Aristotle challenged the notion of God and their views were taken to much of the western world by Alexander the Great. The cracks of a chasm between a religious world view and alternative or secular view started to emerge. From the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century human nature began to take the place of religion in European thought.

Throughout the following centuries different challenges came, they can be characterised as follows:



There was no longer a unified world view

These 'explosions' challenged the nature of how we live and how we decide what is morally right or wrong.

According to Dostoevsky, without God everything is permitted, in fact more recent ethicists and writers argue that not only is it possible it is ethically required.

Ego Ethics argues that an action is morally right if and only if it is to the advantage of the person doing it. I ought to be concerned about others only to the extent that this also contributes to my own interests

Some think that emotional and physical pleasure is the only basis for determining what is good

(Stephen O Sullivan and Philip A. Pecorino 2002)

I cannot help but conclude that Mother Teresa would have done much more good for the poor had she become something useful, like a prostitute or a drug dealer, or better still, a banker or the head of a multi-national corporation.

--Robert White, in *The Diabolical Works of Mother Teresa*

Once we displace God we are left with the inevitable suggestion 'to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die'. We revert to the ideas of Plato that the only sensible option is to pursue what makes us happy, or Epicurus to seek pleasure.

The debate which we as a nation are currently embroiled is about the source of right or wrong, or morality. If there is no God, there is no obligation to do anything other than which brings us the best reward, we are not answerable to anyone other than by the rule of law. The question that this poses is what is the basis for the law that we observe, how is it determined and by who?

The current debate is not about same sex union but about the very basis of our society. If we are not bound by moral absolutes determined by a transcendent, all powerful, immortal God, then by who or what? This is one step further in the campaign to completely secularise our society and push God and the public expression of Christian belief and practice out of the public square.

