

ARE THERE SUCH THINGS AS RIGHT AND WRONG?

September 13, 2015

When in Rome, do as the Romans! Most people are familiar with that statement, and they understand the intention, but is it acceptable? Do we ask ourselves, the government, or a higher power? If it is a higher being, is it one that lives outside of time and in eternity, or is it simply a self-actualized individual that has come to the proper knowledge of how things ought to be through an evolutionary process?

There are a multitude of answers to that question. The Christian will say that God is the source of that information, and that man is not able to guide his own footsteps (Jer. 10:23). The Humanist will be quick to point out that no code of ethics exists outside of the individual, which is commonly referred to as moral relativism. Moral relativism is used to determine action based upon any given situation, which may very well differ from situation to situation as determined by the individual. The postmodernist bases his ethical beliefs in atheism, naturalism, and evolution, but they do differ, in many substantial ways, from Humanist and Marxist ethics. Postmodernism embraces cultural relativism, which determines behavior according to the culture and community wherein a person resides.

In order to properly establish a code of ethics, if one exists, each system must be able to stand up to logic and scrutiny. The purpose of this article is to do just that, and will focus on Humanism, Postmodernism, and Christianity as each relates to ethics.

In order to understand humanism and its ethics, the terms must first be understood. Humanism is a belief system that focuses upon the human. Merriam-Webster defined “ism” as, “a belief, attitude, style, etc., that is referred to by a word that ends in the suffix *-ism*.” *Therefore, Humanism means, “a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values; especially: a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses an individual’s dignity and worth and capacity for self-realization through reason.”* Also, according to Webster, when discussing “ethics” one is determining “rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad.”

According to the defined terms, humanistic ethics is a set of rules regarding behavior that have been determined to be good or bad based upon what each human determines. David A. Noebel, in his book *Understanding the Times*, presents some of the basic tenets humanists hold regarding ethics. The fact that humanists are atheists presents special problems for them when it comes to any type of a code of ethics. Since the Humanist religion is founded in biological evolution, it is impossible to base any beliefs they may have on any type of a rigid or unchanging code because they believe that mankind is evolving and changing in every single aspect of life. Those evolutionary changes are taking place in all disciplines that impact mankind, especially in the area of ethics.

The Humanist code of ethics is moral relativism, which is constantly evolving right alongside man, and dictates the responses to situations based solely upon the situation itself. In other words, technically speaking, if it is wrong to murder someone in order to gain their possessions that may or may not be wrong according to each individual situation where that action may occur. In the arena of ethics, the humanist has many hurdles to cross if he is going to be able to reasonably defend his position when it comes to ethical interaction between people.

Postmodernism has no less trouble when it comes to defining and explaining their standards of right and wrong, and the perceived correct behavior exhibited by people. Like Humanism, Postmodernism is based in atheism, but they embrace cultural moral relativism. Each community and culture that exists in the world should and must determine within the confines of their communities what is right and what is wrong regarding the actions of the community. In other words, a nation, state, city, village, or commune of people will each determine what is right and wrong for their particular group. What is right for one culture or community may be wrong for the one just down the road and vice versa, and what is wrong in one area may not be wrong in the other.

Considering the previous example, it may be wrong in Memphis, TN to murder an individual and take his property, but it may not be wrong in Nashville, TN to commit the same action. Could that possibly make sense to any reasonable person? It only stands to reason if we believe that man is evolving just as his morals evolve, also.

According to Richard Rorty (American philosopher), morality does not even exist, and the only reason that it is promoted, in certain situations, is because it better helps the human species to survive. Morality is simply a way to help mankind overcome complications in this life in order to be more comfortable.

Next week's article will continue to address the idea of right and wrong, and whether or not there are such things.