

THE ETHICS OF DARWIN OR THE ETHICS OF DESIGN: HOW SCIENCE AND
SOCIETY HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE ERROR OF EVOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

Since Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859, the scientific community has witnessed obvious and considerable paradigm shifting. The biblical account of creation, which was considered normative in the mid-19th Century, is currently under vicious attack from scientists. However, the field of ethics has also observed tumultuous times since “evolution” was introduced. As we have devolved from moral absolutism of before Darwin’s day to the modern clamoring for relativism, society has to reflect on whether or not this contemporary slant has actually been progress.

One of the reasons why Darwin has become such a hot topic in recent years is that his reach continues to extend beyond his biological system into the religious realm that is its roots. Evolution was not born of the observation of changes among finches in the Galapagos Islands as he tried to submit, but rather due to his penchant toward an atheistic system. Virtually the entire moral morass in which our society currently finds itself drowning is the perpetuation of Darwin’s attempt to devalue and eliminate God from human thought processes.

What passes for ethics today is a by-product of a secular humanist and moral relativist mindset that has spawned political correctness. A new breed of atheists is ruder and bolder than the previous generation. The social pandemic of mass murders in the

public school systems by social misfits who all seem to invoke an improper understanding of Darwin's natural selection as well as violent video games and hard rock music continues at a pace that makes papers like this obsolete by month's end.

In the first section, this paper will focus on the ethical results of Darwin's work, as well as its influence on Hitler, Freud, and the subsequent social disasters. It will proceed by scrutinizing the works of Peter Singer and Sam Harris, and their influence on society. From there, it will examine natural law as an ethical system for the Intelligent Design movement, and then conclude the comparison by offering biblical ethics as the only embraceable option of the three.

THE ETHICS OF DARWIN

Many writers are inspecting the scientific evidence involved in Darwin's naturalistic theory, but we will ignore them here. In the space available in this paper, we will examine only the impact Darwin's theories have had on society from a moral viewpoint.

Eugenics

The word "eugenics" is the result of combining the Greek word for "good" (eu) with the Greek word for "birth" (geno~) and then molding it into a scientific-sounding expression. The term was coined by Darwin's cousin, Sir Francis Galton in 1883. Journalist Pamela Winnick surmises that Galton "...and his enthusiastic followers believed that 'survival of the fittest' should be left not to nature, but to man-*certain*

men.”¹ She continues by citing a eugenicist who said, ““The essence of evolution is natural selection; the escape of eugenics is the replacement of ‘natural’ selection by conscious, premeditated, or artificial selection in the hope of speeding up the evolution of ‘desirable’ characteristics and the elimination of ‘undesirable ones.’”²

Eugenics is not exclusively the occupation of extremists, such as Nazis. Just as evolution spread into America, so did sterilization and elimination of the weak and undesirable. Tom DeRosa notes, “Eugenics in America was not a fringe movement. The U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark 1927 ruling that authorized the sterilization of a ‘feeble-minded’ Virginia woman.”³

The works of Darwin and Galton thus were discovered in Germany by Ernst Haeckel, a physician with a small practice, who quickly became Germany’s leading evolutionary apologist. Haeckel’s work then spread throughout Nazi Germany and Darwin’s message developed Hitler’s desire to make the Aryan race the superior one by eliminating Jews and other races of lesser value, according to evolution’s ability to classify varying human races as separate species.

Historian Richard Weikart writes that Haeckel’s words, echoing the Darwinian call of naturalism in a bizarre twist, were actually the impetus behind eugenics. He says, “...(Haeckel) lamented some of the dysgenic effects of modern civilization and expressed support for eugenics. In this context, he favorably mentioned the ancient Spartan practice

¹ Pamela Winnick, *A Jealous God: Science's Crusade against Religion* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2005), 285.

² *Ibid.*, 54.

³ Tom DeRosa, *Evolution's Fatal Fruit: How Darwin's Tree of Life Brought Death to Millions* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Coral Ridge Ministries, 2006), 175.

of killing weak and sickly infants...”⁴ Summarizing Haeckel’s ideas as posited by Weikert notes the German’s insistence that life begins at conception, while justifying abortion as a result of the Darwinian notion that the fetus has an equal value to an animal. Haeckel thinly veiled his support of infanticide, abortion, all forms of euthanasia, and even the voluntary murder of the physically and mentally handicapped. A vast majority of Darwinians supported Haeckel and helped develop this horrific ethical approach.⁵

Hitler

Jonathan Wells cites Weikart, who said, “Darwinism by itself did not produce the Holocaust, but without Darwinism...neither Hitler nor his Nazi followers would have had the necessary scientific underpinnings to convince themselves and their collaborators that one of the world’s greatest atrocities was really morally praiseworthy.”⁶

Stanford’s Dinesh D’Sousa skillfully and calmly rejects the aimless and vitriolic words of noted atheist Sam Harris (see below) who insists that Hitler’s actions were the result of Christian service, based on words from *Mein Kampf*. D’Sousa finds later words from the Fuhrer that relegate his own published works to purely propaganda aimed at the public. D’Sousa observes,

If Nazism represented the culmination of anything, it was that of the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century ideology of social Darwinism...Sam Harris simply ignores the evidence of the Nazis’ sympathies for

⁴ Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁶ Jonathan Wells, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2006), 164.

Darwin, Nietzsche, and atheism. So what sense can we make of his claim that the leading Nazis were ‘knowingly or unknowingly agents of religion? Clearly, it is nonsense.⁷

It almost goes without saying after the notes on Hitler and eugenics have been discussed that racism is a considerable factor in Darwin’s work. In fact, in the reprints available today on Darwin’s magnum opus, his original title page is shoved behind a number of illustrations of mammals, reptiles, birds, and insects. Darwin’s original title was *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.⁸ Darwin’s culture of the mid-19th Century Europe supported such thoughts which the 21st Century Christian finds repulsive.

Alister McGrath adequately deals with the hypocrisy of secular humanism as developed in Nazi Germany by saying, “...those who planned the Holocaust, and those who slammed shut the doors of the Auschwitz gas chambers, were human beings—precisely those whom Ludwig Feuerbach declared to be the new ‘gods’ of the modern era, free from any divine prohibitions or sanctions, or any fear of future divine judgment.”⁹

AMERICA’S ETHICIST

Peter Singer is arguably the best-known name among contemporary writers of

⁷ Dinesh D'Sousa, *What's So Great about Christianity?* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2007), 222.

⁸ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species* (London: John Murray, 1859; repr., New York: Grammercy Books, 1979), 51 (page references are to the reprint edition).

⁹ Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 183.

ethics, and he owes more of his notoriety to shock value than to a lucid non-biblical system of ethics. His astoundingly provocative statements are largely his calling card. He has risen to the pinnacle of his profession, a chair at Princeton, largely because he is also a Darwinian atheist who has written and edited numerous texts and articles on ethics.

Perhaps Singer is best known for his animal ethics. He draws a logical progression between an obvious denouncement of racism to that of “speciesism,” whereby he calls for “sound moral basis for relations with those outside of our own species- the nonhuman animals.”¹⁰ From this point he slides to an active state of protest by observing, “...our practice of rearing and killing other animals in order to eat them is a clear instance of the sacrifice of the most important interests of our own. To avoid speciesism we must stop this practice, and each of us has a moral obligation to cease supporting the practice.”¹¹ However, he clearly goes over the top with his vulgarity-laced review of a book describing bestiality. Singer’s review appeared on a sexually-oriented website and intends to juxtapose the cruelty that hens routinely suffer in the egg industry to literal human-animal intercourse. He closes the review by telling about a woman, who was a trained worker with orangutans, being spared from the violence of an aroused male orangutan. He concludes,

The potential violence of the orangutan’s come-on may have been disturbing, but the fact that it was an orangutan making the advances was not. That may be because (the woman) understands very well that we are animals, indeed more specifically, we are great apes. This does not make sex across the species barrier normal, or natural...but it does imply that it ceases to be an

¹⁰ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 48.

¹¹ Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," in *Applied Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 223.

offence to our status and dignity as human beings.¹²

But sticking with Singer's review we spare ourselves the blasphemous assertions in Dekker's book¹³. He claims that the biblical account in which the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Mary, the mother of Jesus, is "is founded on bestiality."¹⁴ This interpretation, by the way, suffers greatly from the fact that it does not occur anywhere in the Bible.¹⁵

In *A Darwinian Left*, Singer unsuccessfully tries (as did Harris in *The End of Faith*) to develop a plausible solution for integrating altruism with evolution. He admits, "Granted, to the extent that those who benefit others gain a reward or avoid a punishment, they are not acting 'altruistically,' in the sense used in evolutionary theory."¹⁶ His argument then weakens even more when he uses an extreme example of the small number of blood marrow donors in England to support his attempt at squaring altruism with the mechanics of evolution.

Nancy Pearcey, in a review of *A Darwinian Left*, catches Singer's logic as circular

¹² Peter Singer, "Heavy Petting," 2001, <http://nerve.com/> (accessed November 10, 2007).

¹³ Midas Dekkers, *Dearest Pet: On Bestiality* (London: Verso, 1994).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁵ All four Gospel accounts depict the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus at His baptism, but concerning Mary's conception, Luke 1:35 simply states, "The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.'"

¹⁶ Peter Singer, *A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution, and Cooperation*, Darwinism Today, ed. Helena Cronin and Oliver Curry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 56.

concerning the adaptation of ethics and observes, “One solution would have been to revive the traditional theism that made disinterested altruism a moral ideal in the first place (albeit with a distinction between humans and other ‘sentient beings’). Instead, he tries to graft that moral ideal onto the Darwinian tree. The graft will not take, and the result is a fatal incoherence.”¹⁷

AMERICA’S ATHEIST

Following suit from the outlandish claims of Singer, a new wave of atheists has been publishing prolifically in recent years. Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens have all published New York Times bestsellers in the past two years. Dawkins is currently the most prolific of the four mentioned, but since Harris is American, and arguably the most polemic of the group, his work will be featured here.

One of the obvious common threads for these writers is a support of Darwin’s evolutionary theory and a disdain for his opponents, whether affiliated through one of the three major world religions or through the scientific community such as the Intelligent Design movement.

Harris begs the question in his popular booklet, “All complex life on earth has developed from simpler life-forms over billions of years. This is a fact that no longer admits of intelligent dispute.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Nancy Pearcey, "Singer in the Rain," *First Things*, no. 106 (October 2000).

¹⁸ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 68.

Harris attacks former House majority leader Tom DeLay, who, like millions, connected the Columbine shootings with evolution because of the extensive evidence by saying, “We might wonder how it is that pronouncements this floridly irrational do not lead to immediate censure and removal from office.”¹⁹

Like Singer, Harris’ logic begins to revolve. He naively attempts to invoke the problem of evil, which few atheist philosophers today will attempt due to the work of Richard Swinburne and Daniel Howard Snyder. In citing examples of what he calls “unintelligent design” to disprove the existence of God, Harris observes,

The human respiratory and digestive tracts share a little plumbing at the pharynx. In the United States alone, this intelligent design feature lands tens of thousands (not exactly scholarly research) of children in the emergency room each year...What compassionate purpose does this serve? Of course, we can imagine a compassionate purpose: perhaps the parents of these children needed to be taught a lesson; perhaps God has prepared a special reward in heaven for every child who chokes to death on a bottle cap. The problem, however, is that such imaginings are compatible with any state of the world. What horrendous mishap could not be rationalized in this way? And why would you be inclined to think like this? How is it moral to think like this?²⁰

THE ETHICS OF DESIGN

The Intelligent Design Movement (ID) began in the late twentieth century as philosophers and other thinkers began to notice growing influence and stifling moral decay upon western society. One description says that ID

holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause rather than an undirected process such as natural selection. ID is thus a scientific disagreement with the core claim of evolutionary

¹⁹ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2004), 156.

²⁰ Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, 78.

theory that the apparent design of living systems is an illusion. In a broader sense, ID is simply the science of design detection- how to recognize patterns arranged by an intelligent cause for a purpose.²¹

Cornelius Hunter encapsulates the thrust of intelligent design as he says, “The word *intelligent* distinguishes ID from evolution. It means that the design we observe was brought about by an intelligence rather than the interplay of unguided natural forces. ID claims that an intelligence is necessary to account for at least some of the design in biology.”²²

In order to stay on the same plane as evolution and to be considered science and not relegated to the realm of philosophy, ID refuses to identify the God of the Bible as the intelligent designer. Subsequently, it may not employ the ethics of the Bible as a weapon to counteract the aversion for morals as formulated by naturalists. However, going back to Aristotle and other philosophers who were also non-biblical and inserting virtue theory into ideas that are obvious and empirical through the observation of nature, an updated version of Natural Law could fit well into the ID system and trump Darwinian hedonism.

J. Budziszewski observes that there is a common ground between people who believe in what was called morality a generation ago and people who reject any form of morality. He invokes both the words of Aristotle and those of the Apostle Paul to state, “In our language, the simplest, most general, and most widely used term for what I am talking about is ‘natural law.’ It takes in both the foundational and moral principles and

²¹ "ID Defined" accessed at <http://uncommondescent.com/id-defined>, 11/9/2007

²² Cornelius G. Hunter, *Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 123.

their first few rings of implications, whether known to reason through conscience or through some other means.”²³

In an earlier work, Budziszewski slants toward the wisdom of Paul who said, “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...”²⁴ Budziszewski observes, “...natural law is especially pertinent to politics just because it is written on the heart, for that makes it a standard for believers and unbelievers alike; not only is it right for all, but at some level it is known to all.”²⁵

In his brilliant historical treatment of the theological use of natural law since the Protestant Reformation, Stephen Grabill summarizes,

...(Reformed scholastics) all share the conviction that Scripture is the cognitive foundation (*principium cognoscendi*) of theology and that all moral arguments can be based on axioms derived from that principium. Consequently, they recognize the existence of a natural knowledge of God that is present in the natural order and discernible either in conjunction with or apart from Scripture. This knowledge, however, has no saving efficacy and merely serves to render all people to be ‘without excuse’ for their moral infractions, as Romans 1:20 attests.²⁶

Not all natural law supporters see it connected to an intelligent designer. Jean

²³ J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co, 2003), 13.

²⁴ Romans 2:14-15

²⁵ J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 11.

²⁶ Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, ed. John Witte, Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 191.

Porter makes a call for natural law to be revisited as a keynote for Christian ethics.

However, she jumps on the bait of evolution as she says,

We cannot accept, as our ancestors did, that the intricate marvels of life are products of conscious design, because they can adequately be explained by a process of natural selection. More fundamentally, we cannot accept the view that living creatures, ourselves included, have an essential nature that was bestowed on them at the beginning of time by a creator God. These objections would seem to be fatal to any theory of the natural law.²⁷

If Darwinian atheism as espoused by Harris creates an ethical relativism as trumpeted by Singer and modeled by Hitler and Harris, its system must be seen as unmitigated failure. Against the backdrop of such relativism, Princeton's Robert George admits the limited development of naturalism as he says, "The natural law tradition's well-known commitment to the idea of moral absolutes...should not obscure the degree to which the tradition recognizes that many important issues of social and economic policy do not admit of a single uniquely correct solution that should, as a matter of natural moral law, govern in all places and at all times."²⁸

Budziszewski concludes that naturalism

...is entirely at odds with what has traditionally been called natural law. It differs not only in content (no precepts) and structure (consequentialist) but in basic ontology (no lawgiver and therefore no law). In these respects it affirms precisely those tendencies of thought that the natural law tradition has always sought to oppose. If any contemporary scientific movement holds promise for the furtherance of the natural law tradition, it is not the stale dogma of natural selection but the theory of intelligent design.²⁹

²⁷ Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 102.

²⁸ Robert P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 230.

²⁹ J. Budziszewski, "Philip Johnson Was Right: The Rivalry of Naturalism and Natural Law," in *Darwin's Nemesis: Philip Johnson and the Intelligent Design*

Subsequently, it should be unveiled that with incredible suspicion growing daily on the so-called scientific evidence postulated by the evolutionists, they cannot point to moral success. In fact, as already seen, ethics in general, and altruism specifically, become quite difficult for evolutionists to explain. Observing the animal kingdom will establish the fact that animals will commit acts of selflessness only with a “family” member. The notion of doing good things for non-family members is completely alien.

Perhaps the reason Darwinists find this notion untenable is their individual consciences have been seared by their hatred toward a concept of a Designer, much less that of a God, whose sacrificial love is manifest according to Romans 5:8 in the fact that, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Budziszewski concludes that as important as natural law is for an ethical system, it does not have the impact of Scripture. He surmises,

...within limits Aristotle’s method is useful even for Christians. Scripture is not an encyclopedia that tells us everything we need to know about every subject...Our only guarantees are that its teachings are truthful, foundational and sufficient for salvation. Therefore, although all propositions must be tested by Scripture, they need not all be found in Scripture. For probing general revelation in domains of the heart where special revelation, though sure, is incomplete, Aristotle’s method is suggestive.³⁰

CONCLUSION-THE ETHICS OF THE DIVINE

Neo-Darwinism with its offspring, Neo-Nazism, Neo-Atheism, and Neo-Ethics may indeed be the rule of the day, but they cannot be considered optimal by even the most objective spectators. Those whose mission it is to negate the word of God and the

Movement, ed. William A. Dembski (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 260.

³⁰ Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart*, 189.

God of the word are finally finding audiences as a result of an ineffective church and her acceptance of the moral relativism with which society has seduced her.

Sadly, Harris begins *Letter to a Christian Nation* with a defiance of Pascal's Wager by saying,

Either the Bible is just an ordinary book, written by mortals, or it isn't. Either Christ was divine, or he was not. If the Bible is an ordinary book, and if Christ an ordinary man, the basic doctrine of Christianity is false...If the basic tenets of Christianity are true, then there are some very grim surprises in store for nonbelievers like myself. At least half of the American population understands this. So let us be honest with ourselves: in the fullness of time,³¹ one side is really going to win this argument, and the other side is really going to lose.³²

Other than the incredible stakes, Harris seems to be overlooking one important point. If his side "loses" the wager, then paying the bet requires eternity in hell, and a human lifetime of hopelessness. In the event that Christians have lost the gamble, they will have escaped a non-existent hell, but they would have led an abundant life on earth, mostly devoid of the material success that Harris will enjoy, but overflowing with love of God, the community of faith, and an unbelieving world, while conducting life with exemplary character, virtue, and obedience to the commands of God.

Some people who consider themselves Christians today, like Porter, see no problem reconciling the Gospel with Darwin. Others are seeking for a synthesis of evolution and creation and are falling for Theistic Evolution as a satisfactory solution between creationism and evolution. They also fail to understand that embracing this washed-out bridge is to deny the inerrancy of Scripture due to the necessary denunciation

³¹ One can only speculate as to whether Harris' use of the language of Gal. 4:4 is intentional or not.

³² Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, 5.

of the Genesis creation account.³³

William Dembski concludes, “When boiled down to its scientific content, however, theistic evolution is no different from atheistic evolution, treating only undirected natural processes in the origin and development of life.”³⁴

Obviously, it does not logically follow that accepting evolution as fact necessarily creates a profile for mass murder any more than following a so-called Christian cult necessitates mass suicide like Jonestown and Mount Carmel or even the murder of doctors who perform abortion. The point is simply that Darwin’s legacy has extended well past the biological structure that his imagination enhanced. A century and a half after its original publication, the aftermath of *On the Origin of the Species* has spilled over not only into the realm of science, but of metaphysics as well. Its venom has flowed from the reflections of a bitter man to the classrooms of today and thus into society at large.

It now appears evident, except perhaps to those who refuse to move from an atheistic position, that America’s ethics have devolved drastically since being exposed to the notion of natural selection. The revival of Darwinism in recent decades has put the focus back on wondering where we came from instead of seeking direction or purpose in life. The ethics of Darwin have been disastrous, and the ethics of Design have been intentionally camouflaged so as not to reveal evangelistic markings. Still, the idea of Design, regardless of its self-stifling, camouflaged form, is nevertheless a progressive

³³ My paper on this is accessible at <http://www.truthseekersministries.net>.

³⁴ William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 110.

step away from the humanistic, self-serving ethics introduced by evolutionary doctrine. Even if we remove the aspect of faith from the debate (at least heuristically), and even if we preclude biblical ethics from consideration, it still remains obvious that an ethic based on the Divine can be considered to be superior to the other options. It now becomes incumbent upon the church to develop these ethics into evidence of a life transformed by faith in Jesus Christ.

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