

## **EVEN IF SECULARISTS AND HUMANISTS DON'T NEED TO STEAL CHRISTIAN VALUES IS THAT STILL WHAT THEY DID?**

God Created Humanism: The Christian basis of secular values by Theo Hobson is an unnecessary book. Do you need a book that tells you secularists and humanists have stolen the Christian value of respect for all people? Why not just say it? The reason a book is needed is to give the impression there is room for debate. Anybody with or without faith can decide we should all respect each other. That is natural. The stealing is done by Christians. It is fine to take the principle but it is not fine to try and claim it as their religion's idea and as something that can only have real meaning for a Christian.

Here we are asking if secularists and humanists took their values of universal equality and respect from Christianity instead of realising they didn't need to?

Let us look at some quotes.

QUOTE: In 2016 Dominic Erdozain ... in *The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx*. He argues that the most influential secularists were motivated by an essentially Christian moral agenda: A visceral sense of right and wrong, rather than a scientific or historical suspicion of supernatural truth claims, has served as the primary solvent of orthodoxy in the West . . . modernity has been characterized by the internalization of religious ideas, not their disintegration. He shows how Spinoza, Pierre Bayle, Voltaire and others were steeped in reformist Protestantism.

COMMENT: More nonsense. Secularists say that right commands itself and this commanding is like a simulated commanding. It only matters that it has enough of the characteristics of the command. The dispute about whether you need a God to command or not is all about how any moral inclination, strict or loose, has a "Thou shalt not in it" even if it is unspoken. You feel or sense that something is commanding you to help that dying baby. We have solved the dispute - a computer "commanding" you will give the rule as much force as a person doing it. It can be said that it is so important to say not murder that it does not matter if the command is something other than the kind of command a person gives. "Command" is as okay as command. God cannot have the right to command just because he creates or has all the power and knowledge. What is wrong with a human being giving us the thou shalt nots?

The other point is the Christian moral agenda is summed up in Jesus' two big commandments to be all for God and then to be for your neighbour as yourself. How can you be all for God and also for your neighbour? You help the neighbour because it is God's will and you see God in the neighbour so it is still all about God. Hobson is divorcing the neighbour stuff from God to make his deceitful argument.

He would say that selfishness is against both commandments. Christians say, "It is selfish to serve the neighbour and leave God out of it for God deserves all our love for without him there would be no neighbour so to fail to respect the thing that sustains the neighbour God means to fail to respect the neighbour truly and deeply." If there is no God then that is selfish for we should just love our neighbour and its not about loving a God at all.

Human nature can help others superficially or to feel good or in the fear that nobody will help them unless they set an example.

Hobson cannot say that virtue such as love and compassion and piety belong to Christianity so that if we want to be loving and compassionate and pious we are in some way being Christian. That is stupid! Christianity gives mixed messages on this subject for the fact remains that Jesus himself impiously worshipped an evil version of God who had women stoned to death and for each loving command you have ten of hate. Its an insult to morality to honour Christianity by saying what Hobson says.

QUOTE: Authentic humanism is positive and absolute; its desire for human flourishing is unlimited. Secular humanism lacks a mechanism that fixes it to absoluteness (though the Marxist belief in revolutionary transformation is a stab at this). It is parasitic on the absolutism that it comes from and scorns. Am I saying that Christians desire the good more completely than secular humanists? Well, that's a hard thing to measure, but it is surely the case that they see 'the good' in more intense, absolute terms: as a call to moral perfection – an impossible demand that one cannot fulfil but must struggle to; as a demand that exposes one's inadequacy, one's inner division between obedience and sin (to slip into religious speech). Christians can face up to the absoluteness of this moral ideal because they have a story that makes sense of our failure to live up to it. The secular humanist, by contrast, thinks in more realistic terms – of being morally good enough by affirming the rights of others. 'Of course no one is perfect,' she says, 'so let's put aside the unhelpful notion of moral perfection and

instead uphold realistic rules of conduct, a moral law – it is enough to be among the morally civilized people, who affirm equality.’ But this is a brittle, somewhat dishonest position, for all humanism, religious or not, is half-hypocritical. All are equal, we say, but we’d rather hang out with an interesting attractive person than a poor, uneducated, smelly one. In other words, morality entails a tension between idealism and our selfishness, and secular humanism lacks a language for pondering this and so evades it. We all have a duty to be moral, it says, and it assumes that this civilized moral way is straightforwardly possible.

COMMENT: Humanism never says it is easy!

QUOTE: In this chapter I have tried to anticipate a basic objection to my argument. Even if humanist morality came from Christianity, this does not oblige us to believe in Christian teaching. It might encourage agnostics to respect this religion but it does not show them how it is inhabitable. So I’ve tried to sketch my understanding of faith as something that is half-inhabitable: as an endless internal argument between acceptance of this mythological and ritual tradition, and rational scepticism. Faith entails honesty about the fact that this tradition is not neatly inhabitable; that part of one’s mind will put up resistance or sulk in the corner. Again, to call this ‘doubt’ is not quite right, for that implies that full belief is possible. It isn’t: belief takes the form of participation in ritual speech-forms, and one can’t stay in that odd water all the time. I’m trying to get away from the assumption that belief is a stable and abstract thing. Instead it is tied to the language of prayer and praise – a language that is in tension with more prosaic parts of one’s mind. Let’s not overstate the instability of this. It’s not as if one is a Christian on some days and an atheist on others, because rational scepticism is in the ascendant. It is a stable instability. Despite the inner tension, it is a stable form of belief and identity. One does believe, despite one’s partial unbelief. Of course, the atheist will be amazed at the open goal I seem to have offered up. ‘Why not just admit that you don’t really believe any of it?’ he will ask. Aren’t I admitting that faith is ‘trying to make yourself believe what you know ain’t so’ (to cite Mark Twain)? Well, it can feel a bit like that – and yet the believer stubbornly sees authority in the cultic language of faith. He sees this language, and this myth, as the engine of life’s meaning.

COMMENT: There is a difference between respecting the Christian creed, the specifically religious beliefs, and respecting what moral insights it has.

CONCLUSION, Hobson wants us to think that secularists and humanists cherry-pick Christianity and throw a lot of it out. Great secularists who take pains to justify their ideas without borrowing are ignored. Secularists and religionists have overlaps or seeming overlaps which can create the wrong impression. And they do create it.

