

The Ethical Dilemma of Teaching Ethics Clothing Unethical Practices with Ethical Virtues

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This paper addresses the question of why unethical behavior continues to be problematic in spite of the attention given to ethics training in education. This paper argues that much of the blame is due to the educational establishment using ethics education (1) to clothe unethical practices with ethical virtues, (2) to promote a pluralistic post-modern viewpoint rather than teach ethics, and (3) to replace logical reasoning in ethics with logical fallacies. This paper reaches the inescapable conclusion that such an approach to the teaching of ethics (so called) will be ineffective in reversing the ethical demise of our society.

INTRODUCTION

When one considers that over the past several years there has been a plethora of journals, monographs, books, conferences, associations, consultants, college courses, media coverage, and overall attention given to the topic of ethics in general, in education, and more specifically in business practice, a logical conclusion would be that our age would be one of the most ethical in the history of the world. The sad truth is this is not the case. Unethical behavior on all levels from the personal level to the public level continues to be problematic. Why is this the case? The purpose of this paper is to address this continuing demise of ethics education.

The approach followed in this paper is not that of an expert in ethics, trained in all the modern day pedagogical nuances, isms, and defenses of the educational establishment. The author claims no expertise in that sense. Rather the approach taken will be that of a participant and observer of the business educational system over the past 30 years both as an educatee and an educator.

In particular, this paper will argue that much of the blame is to be laid at the feet of the educational establishment in that rather than teaching ethics what is done, more often than not, is to use ethics education to clothe unethical practices with ethical virtues. This is accomplished through intentional ignoring of or obfuscating of the subtle shift in focus of education away from the historic theist ethical paradigm (now politically incorrect¹) to the present anti-theist ethical paradigm (now politically correct²). This paper will argue that such an approach is an impediment to student learning in that it inhibits open intellectual inquiry by the student.

Second, this paper will argue that ethics education is not so much concerned with the teaching of ethics as it is with using this teaching to promote a pluralistic post-modern viewpoint (aka social responsibility) that would deny or marginalize the traditional historic link between religion and ethics. This is problematic because Biblical Christian Theism was the cornerstone upon which ethics was built in Western Society. This paper will argue this post-modern approach to the teaching of ethics creates a

moral shipwreck of a student rather than moral literate. Such an approach tends to result in students experiencing a sense of betrayal by the education system resulting in confusion for a student as to what is right and what is wrong.

Third, defense of the anti-theist position in modern education seems to favor the use of sophistic argumentation. Sophistry, as used in this context, refers not so much to the lack of logical reasoning, but more to the practice of disguising logical fallacies as logical reasoning. One author has stated the problem with this type of reasoning as follows:

“There are a thousand things which are not in reality what they appear to be, and that both in the natural and moral world: so that the sun appears to be flat as a plate of silver, and to be less than twelve inches in diameter; the moon appears to be as big as the sun; and the rainbow appears to be a large substantial arch in the sky: all which are in reality gross falsehoods. So knavery puts on the face of justice; hypocrisy and superstition wear the vizard of piety; deceit and evil are often clothed in the shapes and appearances of truth and goodness. Now logic helps us to strip off the outward disguise of things, and to behold them and judge of them in their own nature” (Watts, 2008, p.3).

This type of sophistic argumentation then supports and defends the anti-theist paradigm as it diverts attention away from the potential inherent incoherence of the paradigm and instead detracts rather than enhances the student’s ability to use their reason in the resolution of ethical issues. More often than not, the outcome is that sophistry clothes unethical behavior with ethical virtues with the student being deceived as to how to properly use logic in the pursuit of knowledge.

As long as the educational establishment continues on its present course, this paper reaches the inescapable conclusion that the ethical demise of our society cannot be adequately addressed, even by an onslaught of ethical teaching, because such teaching is, in itself, but a by-product of the ethical demise of our society.

THE TWO ETHICAL PARADIGMS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE PRESUPPOSITIONS

In this discussion of ethics in education, some simplification is necessary to keep the topic understandable to ‘non-experts’, e.g., students and business faculty like myself. In addition, the author is aware that within what the author has labeled the ‘anti-theistic’ paradigm there are a variety of ‘schools of thought’ and that some of these schools of thought may claim some sort of spirituality. However, it is the opinion of this author that even a cursory examination of the various schools reveals that (regardless of the distinctives of each school within the anti-theist paradigm) the various schools all hold to certain presuppositions³ through which they view the world. And at the end of the day it may be said they all reject certain of the presuppositions that are fundamental to the theist paradigm.

Anti-theist Paradigm

The various ethical persuasions that are grouped under this paradigm have one or more of the following presuppositions as foundational to their particular persuasion. As will become evident as the following presuppositions are discussed, the common theme that binds these presuppositions together is their exclusive nature. Whether by design or by accident, the presuppositions, individually and also collectively, exclude Christian theism from this paradigm. The presuppositions that will be discussed are relativism, secularism, and naturalism and humanism.⁴

Relativism

For the purposes of this paper the following definition has been chosen (as representative) for relativism:

“Relativism is the philosophical position that all points of view are equally valid, and that all truth is relative to the individual. This means that all moral positions... are truths that are relative to the individual” (Slick, 2010).

The first hurdle to be faced by proponents of relativism is establishing the truth of relativism. This is problematic since it necessitates having a fixed point of reverence. Thus in order to convince the student of the truth of relativism, the teacher must guide the student away from the logical conclusion that relativism, as used above, is built on a logical fallacy. For example, if two individuals hold conflicting beliefs, the relativist must convince the student that these mutually exclusive beliefs may both be correct. This is contrary to reason that teaches that mutually exclusive beliefs cannot both be right. Therefore, the student must be convinced that there is no absolute right or wrong, and thus either position is equally acceptable. For example, if one student believes it is wrong to engage in academic dishonesty and a second student believes it is right to engage in such behavior, a logical fallacy must be tolerated in order to claim both students' beliefs are right. Relativism is internally incoherent since it is a logical fallacy to claim that two opposing points of view are equally valid.

A second problem encountered by a teacher espousing relativism is the application the student may make with the lesson. If all moral truth is relative to the individual, a student may argue that there should be no adverse consequences if the student does not accept the teacher's standards for classroom performance. Take, for instance, the act of "plagiarism." A student could argue, based upon the presupposition of relativism, that there should be no punishment for plagiarizing another's work for an assignment in the teacher's ethics class. After all, the student may argue, per relativism, plagiarism is neither right nor wrong - it is merely an 'alternative orientation' to intellectual activity. And since other alternative moral orientations are not only tolerated but celebrated on the typical college campus, the same should hold for this alternative orientation as well.⁵

Finally, ethical relativism by definition rejects absolutely the notion of absolute truth. Not only is this problematic for a student (or anyone for that matter) who is seeking to make sense of relativism, but it is also self-defeating as it reveals the internal incoherence of the presupposition. One author aptly summed up the problem as follows:

"Relativism then is a position for which the world still awaits an argument. It is also self-defeating in the sense that every self-styled relativist is forced, sooner or later, to appeal to absolutes of his own making. And it is a theory that robs life of elements needed for any life to have meaning" (Nash, 1990, p. 65).

As will be discussed later, a theist argues that belief in universal standards of right and wrong requires or necessitates an absolute standard giver. However, secularism, as discussed next, argues that the subject of ethics can be understood and properly applied without reference to an absolute standard giver.⁶

Secularism

Secularism, while closely related to relativism, is more blatantly anti-theist in that the secularist divorces the study of ethics from anything sacred – in particular the concept of God as revealed in the Bible. The secularist believes that human life can be fully understood separate and apart from any understanding of the spiritual. Thus, secularism rejects the notion of a spiritual reality; or even if there is a spiritual reality, it is irrelevant. According to the secularist, ethics may be studied and learned without reference to God or religion. For the secularist, the practice of the study of human behavior has replaced the study of divine revelation in the quest for truth in ethics.

Consequently, the secularist teacher of ethics will be unable to satisfactorily answer student questions regarding the role of the sacred in ethics since the secularist, by definition, is limited to explaining human life by human life. For example, the secularist is poorly equipped to address questions of origins of right and wrong; logical explanations for the source of differences between animals and humans; and other similar types of questions and issues. Again, the student is left with unsatisfactory answers to fundamental questions about the meaning of life since the secularist, at best, views God and the Bible as anachronistic and therefore as having no bearing on post-modern ethics. One author has described secularism as:

"the creeping conviction that human life can be lived and understood, in its own terms, without regard to any higher order of reality, that is, without regard to God" (Herberg as quoted by Nash, 1990, p.67).

The shortcomings of secularism need to be addressed but rarely are in the ethics classroom. For example, if secularism is to be believed by the student, logical defenses are needed against charges that secularism has been mainly responsible for much of the “indescribable dislocations and disasters of the past two centuries, beginning with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and moving with catastrophic fatality through German Nazism and Russian and Chinese Communism” (Herberg as quoted by Nash, 1990, p.69). Another author criticized secularism saying it “is the full harvest of the Enlightenment philosophy, a harvest of desperation and a sense of meaninglessness that has spawned the widespread breakdown of modern society” (Cairns, 2002, p 410).

Serious and damning arguments have been raised against secularism in ethics that deserve open and honest intellectual inquiry for the sake of the student. Sadly, it seems the student, more likely than not, leaves the average anti-theist teacher’s classroom with no adequate answers and a sense of hopelessness regarding the widespread breakdown in modern society.

Naturalism and Humanism

Closely related and necessary companions with secularism are naturalism and humanism. The companionship is so intimate they are sometimes subsumed under the heading of ‘secular-humanism.’ Naturalism is the belief that nothing exists beyond the physical or natural world. Humanism is the belief that man is the chief end of man; therefore, there is no higher authority than man himself.⁷ Essentially, humanism places man in the position of God. Thus in the study of ethics, man, not God, is viewed as the final measure of what is good. Man is viewed as epitomizing what is good. (Some who hold to this view qualify their position to be that man is not born good but is born neutral and progressively becomes more good as part of the biological and evolutionary processes.) Based upon this view of man, the mere study of human behavior will establish what is good and right because man is good (or progressively becoming ‘more good’). The humanist, however, is hard put to satisfactorily defend this belief on either the macro or the micro level of human experience because man’s occasional acts of goodness pale when held up against man’s inhumanity to man. This is problematic as once again the anti-theist position is plagued by the internal incoherence of its system.

The humanist position that mankind has a bias to good provides no inherently coherent explanation within the anti-theist position to the following questions: (1) If relativism is true, how is the notion of good defined since relativism, by definition, denies there is either right or wrong? and (2) If mankind is good (or progressively becoming ‘more good’), how, in the face of the ongoing flood of ethical training, does modern society remain in such a state of moral disarray since man’s inherent goodness should require little coaxing or training to become more good?

The anti-theist worldview cannot provide coherent and satisfactory answers to these questions that are in agreement with their presuppositions. Furthermore, it is argued that any attempts to provide reasonable explanations of the nature of man by the anti-theist paradigm must of necessity be done by borrowing from the theist paradigm. As will be discussed next, the theist worldview can coherently explain what is impossible to explain from the anti-theist position. The prior discussion suggests that the anti-theist position is a position that is not built on solid rational thinking; rather, it is a system built on the vagaries of the currently popular conjectures of the moment designed to deny God his rightful place in human society.

Theist Paradigm

As previously discussed, the anti-theist worldview believes an ethical society, based strictly on a study of the natural realm, is not only possible but also inevitable. In contrast, the theist worldview considers any system which minimizes or trivializes the notion of the spiritual to be irrational folly due to the internal incoherence of the presuppositions of such a system. In contrast, the theist paradigm holds to presuppositions that are internally coherent. The result is the theist system is diametrically opposed to and irreconcilable with the anti-theist paradigm.

Certain presuppositions of the theist position will be presented. This discussion will include the presuppositions of absolutism, universalism, and theism.

Absolutism

Juxtaposed against the relativism of the anti-theist paradigm is the notion of absolutism in the theist paradigm. Absolutism in ethics is the idea, in contrast to relativism, that there are absolute standards of right and wrong by which human conduct is measured. Furthermore, these standards not only exist but may also be known. Absolutism also includes the notion of timelessness. The ethics standards by which human behavior is measured do not change over time - they are eternal truths.

However, the theist does not argue that relativism does not have its place. The theist argues that relativism does exist but not as proposed by the anti-theist. Right and wrong are absolute; but making the correct application thereof in different times, in different societies, and in different situations may and probably does change. Consider the following example: In the 15th century a servant takes a silver coin from his master without his master's knowledge or permission. Is this right or wrong? The theist would respond it is wrong because it is stealing, and stealing is a violation of the eighth commandment in the Bible. Now consider an employee in the 21st century who spends 5 hours a day surfing the internet on company time. Is this right or wrong? This is a different application and the answer still depends upon whether the employee is in violation of an absolute standard of right or wrong. That is, if the surfing is a form of stealing from the business, then it would be another application of a violation of the ethical standard to not steal. These two scenarios are different applications of the same absolute truth but with the application being relative to the specific situation. This is in contrast to the anti-theist position in which each individual situation is the standard of right and wrong for judging that situation (situational ethics). Here unchanging standards of right and wrong are the basis for judging situations. Thus, in the theist paradigm, the student has a solid foundation from which to examine human conduct. Standards of right and wrong are changeless in this paradigm.

Universalism

Universalism, as used in this paper, is the idea that right and wrong do not change across cultures, societies, or individuals. Regardless of the mores of a culture, society, or individual, right and wrong are absolute universal invariant truths. Even if a society should decree some action or behavior that is wrong to now be ethically right does not change the truth regarding the rightness or wrongness of such behavior. Universalism argues that to hold otherwise would make the concept of right and wrong meaningless. Further, there is no logical reason to believe as truth the notion that "what is right for you may not be right for me." The theist would argue that cultural norms (or even individual beliefs) must be accountable to universal standards of right and wrong; otherwise, the notion of right and wrong is meaningless.

Furthermore, 'what works' or what is a statistical average of human behavior in a given condition is not an infallible guide to truth. The theist would argue that it is not 'what works' or what the majority believes that should dictate what is right or wrong. Rather, knowledge of right or wrong should guide in making decisions even if that is viewed as 'not workable' or a minority position. The theist would argue that the reason why following the majority is not an infallible guide to truth is because mankind is both imperfect and self-serving (in a fallen state (as will be discussed later in the paper)). Consequently, the logical result of rejecting the idea of universal absolute truth opens the door to mankind accepting and legitimizing morally deviant and/or destructive behavior that is amenable to mankind's fallen condition.

The theist would argue further that the current moral morass into which this nation has descended is inexorably linked to the attempts by contemporary society to justify the unjustifiable - the fallibility of human nature. Examples would include the widespread breakdown of marriage and the home, societal sanction of morally deviant behavior, and societal condemnation of those who oppose such behavior. Finally and most importantly for purposes of this paper, the theist would argue that the rejection of the idea of universal absolute truth is a major contributing factor in the widespread breakdown in ethics in both academia and business.⁸

In this regard, it may be argued that absence of universalism and the prevalence of the relativism in ethics results in a loss of accountability which is necessary to restrain human behavior. Without accountability to a higher standard, it is easier to be self-deceived and justify unethical behavior. By

teaching there is accountability to an absolute standard by which actions will be judged regardless of the situation provides a ‘reality check’ against self-deception.

As will be discussed next, it follows naturally that for there to be universal, absolute, invariant truth, there must by necessity be a universal, absolute unchanging ‘truth giver’ and administrator of this truth. Central to the worldview of the theist, then, is the belief that God is.

Theism

Contrary to the anti-theist view, the theist believes God, not man, is the measure by which man’s ethical behavior should and will be judged. Man has not been left to himself; rather, nothing exists apart from God and nothing can be known as it should be known apart from a knowledge of God. The theist also believes that God has not left man to his own devices to try to search out what God is like and what he expects of man. Rather, in the Bible God has revealed what man needs to know about God and what man needs to know about the nature of man.

Theism offers a coherent explanation for the human experience. Man is a fallen creature and as such has a fallen nature. As a fallen creature, man is estranged from God in his mind and does not even desire to retain a right knowledge of God. Man is spiritually dead. This fallen nature manifests itself in man’s thinking and his actions. The theist argues that the Bible describes what is so easily observable: that man does not have a bias towards truth and righteousness (doing good), but on the contrary fallen man has a bias towards unrighteousness (man is not good nor is man becoming progressively less fallen). Thus, an internally coherent explanation of the history of man is possible for the theist. History is a chronicle of man’s alienation from God and of man’s inhumanity towards man.

In addition, the theist is able to explain that instances of ‘doing good’ in man’s history are the result, not of the inherent goodness of man, but rather, of the restraining influence of a good God. Further, the purpose of human governments and societal structures is that they are to further the purposes of a good God and to operate as restraining influences on man’s fallen nature. Thus, any ‘good’ that is attributed to man is ultimately still tainted by man’s fallen nature.

The theist view provides the logical answer for why it is important to teach ethics and why it is important for businesses and professions to have professional codes of conduct. Simply put, they are necessary in order to place restraints on and to provide accountability for mankind’s propensity to self-serving behavior.⁹ The theist paradigm is able to go where the anti-theist position cannot go; it can provide internally coherent explanations for the ethical issues of the day.

As will be argued next, the teaching of ethics apart from or outside a context that recognizes both the existence of God and the reality of man’s fallen condition is fatally flawed and results in inadequate and/or unsatisfactory solutions to the ethical issues and declination of modern society.

THE PROBLEMS FOR STUDENTS IN AN ANTI-THEIST CLASSROOM

Thus far this paper, through comparison of the anti-theist and theist paradigms, has argued that the anti-theist system of thought is deficient because of its lack of internal coherence and its tendency to undermine human reason and experience. If these criticisms are valid, then this suggests that the learning environment for students in the anti-theist classroom is problematic. This section of the paper will discuss three problems students may encounter in such an environment and the related implications for student learning.

Inhibition to Open Intellectual Inquiry

One of the problems likely to be encountered by the average student in the average university when being taught business ethics is that most college instructors, even in universities that claim to foster an environment of open intellectual inquiry, actually discourage intellectual inquiry if it is perceived to be politically incorrect. The ethics instructor often, either by intention or through ignorance, is unable or unwilling to recognize, let alone celebrate, the theist worldview of ethics. In addition, the typical ethics instructor is unable or unwilling to recognize that “arguments over conflicting presuppositions *between*

worldviews [, therefore,] must be resolved somewhat differently, and yet still rationally, from conflicts over factual existence claims *within* a world view or system of thought” (Bahnsen, 1985, p.5). The outcome is that challenges to the currently dominant, i.e., politically correct anti-theist paradigm, are not permitted. There is freedom of expression to the student only if the expression supports the dominant or controlling paradigm. However, the student in a politically correct classroom is often given the freedom to demonize those theist views or ideas that are rejected by the controlling paradigm. An expression by the student that either challenges the controlling paradigm or defends the non-controlling paradigm is often silenced, and the student may also suffer various negative repercussions that range from public ridicule and classroom marginalization to grade penalties. A common rationale by the modern university instructor in defense of this tactic is that it is necessary to silence the competing view to avoid “trouble” or to prevent undermining the “harmony” of the campus environment. In other words, in the ethics class of the modern university, the theist viewpoint is often treated as troublesome or a threat to the harmonious functioning of the instructor’s objectives for the class and thus is unacceptable.

Another author has written that the use of the “harmony” rationale only obfuscates the real reason for the rout of the theist position from the modern day university ethics class.

“There is an unmistakable bias against religious and moral values in our public schools and in higher education...” This bias is such that “Many of them [educators] regard the pursuit of moral illiteracy for their students as their proudest accomplishment” (Nash, 1990, p.52).

The student is deceived into thinking that he/she is receiving an open and intellectually diverse training in ethics when in reality what the instructor has accomplished is a subtle form of indoctrination. This is problematic, in essence, since indoctrination has now been substituted for moral literacy. The implications for the business world are very sobering. What now becomes the basis for subsequent behavior is nothing more than political indoctrination under the veil of academic enlightenment.

Confusion on Right and Wrong

As presented in the above discussion of the theist paradigm, the removal of God from the ethics classroom is problematic since a belief in universal absolute truth is dependent upon a universal absolute truth giver. With the removal of God from the ethics classroom, the foundation upon which universal absolute truth is built and sustained has been removed. Without absolute right or wrong, the logical end result is that the student now is faced with the difficult, if not impossible, task of measuring what is ethical and what is not ethical in any given situation - there is no standard by which to measure. The student now has neither standards by which to judge (other than the ever-changing mores of society) nor accountability to a supreme truth giver; thus, restraint on behavior is removed and what is ethical becomes merely a decision as to what is expedient. Any guides proffered to mitigate this problem, e.g., an economics based analysis of maximizing the economic benefit to all affected stakeholders, is easily marginalized by the student since the anti-theist paradigm offers no rational reason why such a guide to ethics decisions should be considered right.

The student no longer has a sure guide for the determination of what is right and wrong. The result may be a loss of respect for authority and the development of a cynical attitude towards life. The result on a societal level may be described as follows:

“We are surrounded on all sides by the wreckage of our great intellectual tradition. In this kind of spiritual chaos, neither freedom nor order is possible. Instead of freedom, we have the all-engulfing whirl of pleasure and power; instead of order, we have the jungle wilderness of normlessness and self-indulgence” (Herberg as quoted by Nash, 1990, p. 53).

Deception Not Rational Thinking

Another problem the average student may encounter in the average ethics classroom during classroom discussions is that such discussions tend to be, either by plan or by accident, based more on sophistry than on logical reasoning. As previously defined, sophistry as used in this context refers less to the lack of reasoning but more to the practice of disguising logical fallacies as logical reasoning. Sophistry then is the

use of “unsound or misleading but clever, plausible, and subtle argument or reasoning” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1964). In the ethics classroom, the result, more often than not, may be that through sophistry unethical behaviors are clothed with ethical virtues - wrong behavior is made to look right.

Consider, for instance, the use of vulgar and/or profane language in the classroom, the workplace, or other professional settings. An argument put forth for the use of such language is it is more forceful and thus more effective in communicating the strength of the speaker’s arguments. The fallacy here is that profane language has no relation to the strength or weakness of the merits of a particular argument; rather, it distracts the listener from the potential logical weaknesses of a speaker’s argument with emotional appeals to vulgar or profane topics. This is a form of sophistry.

Consider again the current prohibition against religion in the public square whether it be the ethics classroom, the workplace, or other professional settings. The argument often put forth is that the discussion of the theist position in ethics is forbidden due to the “separation of church and state”; therefore, the freedom of individuals to discuss concepts such as God must be restricted. The fallacy in this argument is that separation of church and state is not a valid argument for silencing open intellectual inquiry - such discussions do not violate the notion of separation of church and state. This sophistic type of argument is used primarily to silence the discussions of the inherent weaknesses of the anti-theist position.

The chilling effect that such sophistry has on the ethics classroom is it inhibits the intellectual curiosity of the student. In addition, as illustrated earlier, the bright student might turn this sophistic approach to his/her advantage by using it to argue that what the instructor might define as unethical behavior on the part of the student, e.g., plagiarism,¹⁰ is really nothing more than an ‘alternative intellectual orientation’. Such behavior, the student could argue, should be celebrated, not condemned by the instructor. As this illustrates, the student may, due to exposure to sophistry in reasoning, both be deceived and use, to deceive, deception that may prove to be a disadvantage both in the classroom and later in the workplace. The use of sophistry in the classroom may provide the instructor with short-run victories in the silencing of opposing points of view; however, the potential long-run implications or potential end results are sobering to consider.

CONCLUSION

If an educational system inhibits open intellectual inquiry in the name of political correctness, creates confusion as to right and wrong, and uses sophistry to deceive students into believing they are thinking rationally, then is it any wonder students trained in this system have a defective moral compass?

Those who have been the champions of the anti-theist position, rather than being distressed, should be elated as they see the moral morass in which our society (and the business world in particular) has descended. They should be proud to see that their current (and former) students have learned their lessons so well. Only those who reject the anti-theist position have the right to be distressed.

“It is nothing short of amazing that it is the pragmatists, the relativists, the deconstructionists, and other twentieth century sophists who have the temerity to dismiss Christianity as a house of unreason. One sure sign of a rational human is her ability to recognize an intellectual charlatan when she sees one. What better candidates for this title can there be than people who claim that truth and meaning are relative and presume to tell us this by means of statements they assume to be both true and meaningful. What must we think of a society and academicians who regard this sort of thing as serious scholarship?” (Nash, 1990, p. 158).

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; but the folly of fools is deceit. Prov. 14:8.

ENDNOTES

1. Political correctness is defined for purposes of this paper as the phenomenon of the “censorship of speech and ideas in the name of sensitivity” on college campuses (Young 2004). Thus an idea or speech deemed to be insensitive is politically incorrect and is the object of censorship. Of course this raises the issue of who decides what is insensitive and how is insensitive to be defined?
2. The labels chosen for these two paradigms may at first seem over-simplistic in that there are many different competing religions or views of both God and man. The reason these labels were chosen was that all non-biblical or extra-biblical views have a common theme; they are at odds in some fundamental way with the Biblical revelation of God and/or the Biblical revelation of man. (This includes views that profess to believe the Bible but use other authority to interpret or supercede that of the Bible.)
3. The term ‘presuppositions’ is used in this paper to denote those underlying beliefs that are not subject to question. These presuppositions form the lens through which the viewer views the world (and all competing worldviews), i.e., the worldview of the individual.
4. The author freely acknowledges that he is not presuppositionally neutral in his approach. Furthermore, the author believes that at the most fundamental level no one can be neutral with respect to their convictions about the topics as discussed in this paper. However, that does not mean the conflicts between worldviews cannot be rationally addressed. The approach must be somewhat different from that followed when arguing factual existence claims within a system of thought. The author would argue that what we must examine is the internal coherence or lack thereof of each system. In a very real sense, the entire question of how an instructor teaches ethics depends upon whether or not the instructor believes in the existence of God. The author believes that “the transcendental proof for God’s existence is that without Him it is impossible to prove anything” (Bahnsen, 1985, p.5).
5. The author does not condone the practice of plagiarism but argues that a prohibition against plagiarism cannot be logically defended by proponents of relativism.
6. In contrast, a theist believes right is determined by divine revelation. “What God has revealed of Himself establishes the absolute norm of what is right. Right is what God is and what God does. It needs no other justification” (Cairns, 2002, p.160).
7. For purposes of this paper the terms ‘man’ and ‘mankind’ are used in their traditional historic sense to denote all of human society regardless of gender.
8. Following are some recent statistics on academic dishonesty: 80% of "high-achieving" high school students admit to cheating. 51% of high school students did not believe cheating was wrong. 95% of cheating high school students said that they had not been detected. 75% of college students admitted cheating, and 90% of college students didn't believe cheaters would be caught. Almost 85% of college students said cheating was necessary to get ahead (www.caveon.com/resources/cheating_statistics.htm as of February 15, 2010).
9. The theist also can provide a coherent answer why even the best of men may and do often have serious ethical lapses. The Bible provides several examples of ethical lapses of ‘good’ men and also provides a coherent explanation of why they occur. Simply put, at our best, we still are fallen creatures.
10. See appendix A for the complete illustration of the sophistic argument for plagiarism.
11. As previously stated in footnote 3 of the paper, the author does not condone the practice of plagiarism.

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APPENDIX A: PLAGIARISM: WHAT SHOULD BE THE POSTMODERNIST RESPONSE?¹¹

Recently, the public press has directed our attention to the apparent widespread problem of plagiarism in our schools and universities. Of course, the traditional response to this issue is to ask how this affront on traditional moral values can be stopped or at least controlled.

But, maybe, we need to revisit this issue in light of our post-modern world culture. It may be this traditional negative moral response needs to be objected to since one could argue that it is wrong for one individual or group to impose their personal moral and/or religious values on others. In other words, if we assume morals are not invariant, universal truths, than we can proceed to argue that there is really nothing inherently wrong with plagiarism. Rather, it merely represents an alternative orientation to intellectual endeavors that in the past has been repressed by certain individuals and societies and religions through tactics such as intimidation, fear, discrimination, etc.

Thus, we arrive at the argument that plagiarism may merely represent an alternative lifestyle and as such should be a protected civil right, similar to other lifestyle choices.

Following this line of argument, one could suggest various political and social action agendas that have been found useful in other lifestyle choice contexts to be effective in altering the masses perception of and close mindedness to this particular ‘intellectual orientation.

First. We would need to respond to any call for enforcement of laws and rules against plagiarism as just an outdated attempt to force one individual’s lifestyle upon others. As a part of this action item, we would also want to take every opportunity to label opposition to plagiarism as an irrational phobia and thus intimidate the opposition through fear. It may be suggested a term such as ‘plagiaphobia’ might be an effective label. Obviously, capturing the attention of the news media is going to be a critical component of this action item. In addition, we would need to argue against the term ‘plagiarist’ since it has so many negative connotations associated with it. Possibly we should replace the term with something that is more positive. One suggestion would be to replace the p----- term with say ‘intellicloning.’ In fact, we could then replace ‘plagiaphobia’ with the more political correct term of ‘intellicloningphobia.’

Second. We should capitalize on the gains made in other lifestyle choices and claim discrimination when intellicloningphobics deny equal rights to intelliclonists, whether occurring in the classroom, on

the job, or any other place this scourge of plagiarphobia is manifest. This, of course, would involve not only media attention but also lawsuits in the court system.

Third. We should seek to win the favor of the universities and the public school system. They must embrace intelliclonia under their diversity statements since it merely represents another alternative lifestyle with respect to intellectual achievement. Activists promoting this agenda on the university campus would do well to follow the strategies that other lifestyle advocates have found productive in capturing their stronghold. Some suggestions would be to recruit big name intelliclonists to make speeches that attack the traditional view as a narrowly bigoted approach to treating nice people who have merely followed the dictates of their own conscience in pursuing this lifestyle. Diversity training workshops could include sessions designed to 'reeducate' faculty to a more open view of this lifestyle. Activists in the faculty would be advised to put forward resolutions condemning discrimination against intelliclonists. These resolutions might also call for equal treatment with respect to intellectual benefits such as research and scholarship awards and assistantships. Also, activists could argue for intelliclonists' manuscripts to receive EEOC treatment when being considered for manuscript competitions.

Faculty recruiting should encourage those who are avowed intelliclonists to apply for positions. Special funding could be set up, as well, to provide incentives to help encourage diversity of this type in the college faculty. The ultimate purpose of the activist on the campus would be to replace the negative stigma attached to intelliclonists and replace it with a mindset that will promote harmony on the college campus for this segment of society. In our post modern world, embracing intelliclonia on the college campus will help to ensure that universities are able to attract the best and brightest among both faculty and students.

Fourth. Probably the most difficult challenge will be the social reengineering of churches and religion. Again, however, the groundwork has already been laid by the gains made by activists of other lifestyle orientations. Possibly the intelliclonists could develop partnerships with the other alternative lifestyle activists and develop some synergy through their combined efforts.

In conclusion, this is an opportune time for our post-modern world to move forward in this important area of alternative and intellectual orientations. It is time to act, to seize the moment, to capitalize on the momentum gained by other lifestyle activists, and to see this logical next step in moving from traditional moral exclusivism to total moral inclusivism in our post-modern society. May the gods be pleased to smile on our endeavors and may we see the fulfillment of our post-modern dreams in this brave new world.