

BEYOND COSMIC DICE

MORAL LIFE IN A RANDOM WORLD

OVERVIEW

Morality is our biological destiny. Traits that we view as moral are deeply embedded in the human psyche. Honesty, fidelity, trustworthiness, kindness to others, and reciprocity are primeval characteristics that helped our ancestors survive. In a world of dangerous predators, early man could thrive only in cooperative groups. Good behavior strengthened the tribal bonds that were essential to survival. What we now call morality is really a suite of behaviors favored by natural selection in an animal weak alone but strong in numbers.

Despite abundant evidence to the contrary, human beings are inherently moral creatures. Our inherent good, however, has been corrupted by the false morality of religion. For 2000 years, religious doctrine has manipulated us with divine carrots and sticks. If we misbehave, we are threatened with the hot flames of hell. If we please god, we are promised the comforting embrace of eternal bliss. Under the burden of religion, morality has become nothing but a response to bribery and fear, and a cynical tool of manipulation for ministers and gurus of every stripe. We have forsaken our biological heritage in exchange for coupons to heaven.

Faith has triumphed over reason, and we have suffered terribly as a result. In much of the world, humanity endures crowded poverty, taught that contraception is an affront to god. We rape our environment, told in Genesis that the earth's resources were put here for our exploitation and pleasure. Millions have perished in wars fought in the name of some godhead. Genocide, torture, and holocausts are perpetrated in the cause of a loving father in heaven. As comedian George Carlin famously surmised, "God is the leading cause of death." This vengeful, wrathful, bloodthirsty deity is not an appropriate source of moral guidance. Quite the contrary!

Certainly, popular authors such as Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris understand the inherent danger of religion's false promise. All are eloquent and fully justified in their respective diatribes against god. But these authors have life easy. Religion is so deeply flawed that bashing god makes for poor sport. The target is too easy, like fish in a barrel, deer in the headlights, or flightless quail on a Dick Cheney hunt.

Tearing down religion is useful only if a viable alternative is offered. We need to take the next step of suggesting solutions to humanity's most pressing problems. The authors do so here by returning to core values based on our own evolutionary history, derived from our biological legacy free from myth and fable. **BEYOND COSMIC DICE** shows us how we can move past faith and god to a life more complete.

BEYOND COSMIC DICE offers a new perspective on the purpose and meaning of life free from any divine influence. To glimpse this world, imagine for a moment that there is no invisible man in the sky using magical powers in "mysterious ways" to control our fate. Imagine that we can toss away the crutch of false hope and bad myth to walk unhindered down the path of personal responsibility. Without the burden of a wrathful god, we have the power to create our own meaning, our own sense of purpose, our own destiny. By rejecting the false premises of religion we are free to move beyond the random hand we are dealt at birth to pave our own road to a better life.

But with freedom, of course, comes the obligation to act wisely and responsibly. We fulfill this duty first by taking a more modest view of our place in the world. When we see that humans are a natural part of the ecosystem, not above or separate from the environment, we will protect the resources that sustain us. When we reject the hubris and conceit of religion, we will redefine our relationship with each other without calling upon god to smite our enemies. When we understand that true morality is independent of religious doctrine, we will create a path toward a just society. **BEYOND COSMIC DICE** will be our guide to a full life in which we no longer accept the arbitrary and destructive constraints of divine interference.

BEYOND COSMIC DICE comes not a moment too soon. The need to rise above religion has never been more urgent. Our Earth is in crisis. Religion corrupts our relationship with the environment, fosters extremism that threatens our security at home and abroad, and breeds outlandish hypocrisy in personal behavior and public policy. **BEYOND COSMIC DICE** speaks to people who no longer accept this status quo as inevitable. Morality without religion encourages sound environmental stewardship, offers a new approach to social ethics, and promotes and strengthens our better side. For those willing to consider a new path, **BEYOND COSMIC DICE** shows the way.