

# The Inadequacy of Science for Moral and Social Issues

I'm sure this title will infuriate a good many people. It is not my intent to dishonor the scientist; it is an honorable profession. Rather, it is a logical observation that should be clear to any who think about it.

Science is singularly unsuited to make moral decisions for society. I am not talking about individual scientists; many are quiet moral people. I am talking about the institution of science itself. Science concerns itself about what *can* be done; morality is about what *should* be done. There are a great many things that can be done that should not be done. Just because I *can* turn on an ignition, operate some pedals and turn a wheel after binge drinking does not mean I *should* drive while drunk.

Most morality is understood as a cause and effect relationship, which is a specialty of science. But there is something more to morality than simply the desired effect attained by a given cause. Morality (at least in the Christian sense) concerns itself with Human Dignity regardless of how lofty the ultimate goals are. One employer may pay his workers because he feels he owes them a debt for the work they did for him; another employer may pay his workers only because slavery is illegal. The end result is the same, but it's the first employer who recognized Human Dignity while the second has no such concept. For Jews and Christians, morality is also tied to love. Biblical love is not an emotion; it is virtue in action and it always respects Human Dignity. Let us see how this compares to a morality based exclusively on cause and effect.

A co-worker once told me that the goal of an employer is to pay his employees as little as possible to get workers to show up, and that the goal of a worker is to do as little work as possible so as not to get fired. I think this summarizes the problem of "cause and effect" morality perfectly. The employer's method is hardly a formula to attract workers that will provide superior work. On the other side, the workers attitudes are hardly a formula to have the company's products and services stand out among its competitors. This is known as "Minimalism" and is violently opposed by both Judaism and Christianity.

The Judeo/Christian idea of morality is well explained by Saint Pope John Paul II in his book *Love and Responsibility*, written before he became the Holy See. While he was specifically discussing spousal love and marriage, he pointed out that the basic premise was applicable outside the marriage as well. The goal of spousal love is to give up the "I" to form a "we" with a common goal of goodness that to which both willingly subordinate themselves to. In the earlier example, a form of this love can exist if both the manager and the workers have the good of the company as a common goal *and* both are willing to give up their personal agendas for the betterment of the company. This promotes a good atmosphere that attracts quality workers, and improved work efficiency that results in bigger profits and better benefits for all.

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