

Atheist Community: Too Many Atheists Embracing 'Troubling' Morals

In recent years, the atheist movement in North America has begun to experience institutional rot. For example, in May, "Eiy nah," an ex-Muslim atheist based in Toronto, Canada, [denounced](#) at her *Nice Mangoes* blog, "blind faith, dogmatism, tribalism, homophobia, sexism, sexual abuse and harassment, transphobia " in their movement. Darwinian atheist [P. Z. Myers responded](#), lamenting the "shambles":

I noticed the "troubling turn" about 8 years ago, as more and more atheists began to rally around two themes: the Glorious Leaders who were fonts of inarguable Reason & Logic, and a definition of atheism that exempted them from all social responsibility or ethical obligation. The other big difference was that unlike Eiy nah, I resisted criticizing with the excuses of #NotAllAtheists and they'll outgrow the regressive social tendencies if we just keep trying. I was wrong. And it is quite depressing.

Indeed. A recent *Buzzfeed* piece on allegations of [sexual harassment](#) against celebrity astrophysicist [Larry Krauss](#), a frequent [speaking partner](#) of Richard Dawkins, not only [dimmed Krauss's career prospects](#) considerably but [focussed the problems](#) for a broad audience. (Note: [Krauss has replied here](#), defending himself and regretting the damage done to the atheist cause.)

One difficulty for the atheists is that, apart from not believing in God, they don't believe in sin. "Eiy nah" touchingly confesses, "These same blindspots and/or bigotries are mocked when describing 'those backwards regressive theists', but they *still* exist in the post-religion

communities and online spaces I find myself increasingly reluctantly a part of.” She writes as if something other than unredeemed human nature were the cause of sin.

But then how *can* we ground good and evil in a world ruled by blind nature? Atheist spokespersons sound convinced that the right opinions and the right policies will make people virtuous. Then they discover that they, the very creators and purveyors of said opinions and policies, are not virtuous. And they don’t know what to do about it except denounce each other, perhaps because for once, they can’t blame the church. Of course, they could go on trying to be more virtuous by force of will, but we must assume, in charity, that they have already tried that.

Traditional Christians who are say that it is only the grace of God that keeps us from much more serious sin are not just kidding. Sin is too deeply embedded in every human being to yield to a mere correct set of opinions, program of moral improvement, or strength of will.

An intellectual problem currently dogs the atheist movement as well. “Eiyah” fears that the movement is going [“right wing”](#):

What one would not expect however, is that the online movement that has developed ...would be biased strongly against the left, progressives, feminism – with many of it’s [sic] prominent leaders signal boosting right leaning talking points or rightwing talking heads much of the time.

She worries about the fact that some prominent atheists are attracted to the [intellectual dark web](#), “an alliance of heretics” making “an end run around the mainstream conversation” (*New York Times*). The dark web includes figures like [Jordan B. Peterson](#), [Steven Pinker](#), and [Bret Weinstein](#),) who want to discuss research findings and contemporary events without the muzzle of political correctness. New atheist [Sam Harris](#), a [dark webber](#), has recently been accused of

[“pseudoscientific racist speculation”](#) by assorted progressives. Why? Having finally read sociologist [Charles Murray](#)’s controversial book on IQ, [The Bell Curve](#) (1994), Harris doesn’t think it is mere “racist trash” but an argument from a body of data that a scientist like himself should answer. His attackers prefer that the book be denounced unread.

And that is where the atheists face a brutal choice: to remain honest truth seekers, they must part company with serious progressives. For example, atheists believe that it is true that there is no God. Serious progressives believe that all “truths” are constructs created by power-seekers. Whether or not progressives claim to be atheists, they are nihilists. For all they know, there could be a God as long as he is not in their way when they force others to think, say, or do something. The post-modern progressive is as deadly an enemy to atheists as he is to theists. He is deadly to the intellectual life, period.

A paper given at [this year’s](#) Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (Canada) offers an interesting angle on the atheist movement’s future. [Comparative religion student Chris Miller took on](#) the best-known trait of public atheists: mocking the beliefs of others. As Joseph Brean [recounts](#) at the *National Post*,

The New Atheists were never a particularly funny bunch. They were either, like Richard Dawkins, chippy materialists with a quasi-religious faith that science can offer a complete answer to any mystery worth contemplating. Or they were, like Christopher Hitchens, swaggering verbal stylists whose cleverness put a charming gloss on sentiments about believers that would otherwise sound like hate speech.

Hate speech? Ouch! But it’s true. More important, Brean doesn’t sound defensive in putting it that way.

Miller's research focuses on the "Comic Atheists," [Bill Maher](#), [Seth McFarlane](#) (Family Guy), [Ricky Gervais](#) and [Marc Maron](#), who probably have far more influence on popular culture than say Richard Dawkins. As Brean writes,

As it often does on the schoolyard, their cruel mockery conceals an insecurity, and it offers a pop cultural case study on the ancient human tendency to demonize and vilify people who think differently ... These and other comedians defend their particular worldview by negating or critiquing the worldview of others," Miller said. "When atheists make fun of religious people, they are therefore pointing out what they believe 'should' be seen as normal."

At one time, it was taken for granted that atheists had the right to behave that way toward theists. But traditional theistic religion has much less power in society than formerly. So a question arises, why it is still socially OK for atheists to spew hate and scorn unchecked? If the world grows tired of their preaching and pretensions, in a post-truth age where most people strive to be nice, they may end up making fewer converts than [astrology](#) does. Let's see what happens in a decade or so.

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