

# Anthony Fauci, Moral Autonomy, and the New Priests of Science

There's something almost poetic about the man who [considers himself the mouthpiece](#) for science openly proclaiming allegiance to his personal moral code over the moral code of the Catholic religion he claims to identify with. I refer to [a video](#) recently posted by Laura Powell, in which Anthony Fauci explains his relationship to religion, specifically the Catholicism he was raised in. Fauci says, "I think my own personal ethics on life are, I think, enough, to keep me going on the right path. ... I identify myself as a Catholic ... but as far as practicing it, it seems almost like a pro forma thing that I don't really need to do."

*Anthony Fauci explains that although he identifies as Catholic, his "personal ethics on life" are so strong that he has no need to practice the religion. "It seems like a pro forma thing that I don't really need to do."*  
[pic.twitter.com/r5YbCs2gbM](https://pic.twitter.com/r5YbCs2gbM)

– Laura Powell (@LauraPowellEsq) [December 9, 2023](#)

One wonders: Is Fauci intentionally aiming to become a stereotypical icon of modern man? The attitudes he expresses in the short video clip are a good summation of the *zeitgeist*. At times, Fauci appears like a poorly-drawn satirical figure in a novel or a movie, or a less-than-subtle allegorical personification of "Modern Science" in some moral fable. But no, he is a living, breathing human being, and that comes almost as a shock.

Not surprisingly, the video generated a series of hilarious,

if not entirely fair, comments on Twitter (now X), offered at the expense of “America’s Doctor.” But my purpose here is not to join the Fauci-bashing party, nor to comment on his COVID policies, nor to comment on the state of his soul, which is above my pay grade.

What I am interested in is how Fauci’s statements provide a window into the mindset of the progressive, enlightened, scientific, post-Christian West. In other words, this kind of moral hubris isn’t a problem unique to Fauci. To use one of his own favorite words, it’s a pandemic.

Many philosophers have proclaimed man’s moral independence—that is, his ability and right to choose for himself what is good and evil. One such philosopher who has been an enormous influence on the modern mind is Immanuel Kant, the father of “moral autonomy,” which the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy [defines as](#) “the capacity to deliberate and to give oneself the moral law, rather than merely heeding the injunctions of others.”

In [a famous essay](#), Immanuel Kant defined the Enlightenment as “man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity,” calling on his audience to have the courage to use their understanding “without guidance from another.” Philosopher and writer Edward Feser [puts it this way](#): “We must in [Kant’s] view be ‘autonomous’ if we are to be truly free – not lawless, to be sure, but not ... bound by a law external to us. Rather, we must be ‘self-legislators,’ bound only by a law that is somehow of our own making. Kant also famously describes us as ‘ends in ourselves.’”

Sound familiar? It should. We are steeped in this philosophical atmosphere all the time. Feser writes:

*These ideas have been enormously influential. ... Modern people of all political and religious persuasions have come to see ‘respect for persons,’ ‘human rights,’ ‘human dignity,’*

*'freedom,' and the like—rather than, say, submission to the natural law or to the will of God—as the fundamental categories in terms of which to address moral and political issues. To this extent, 'We are all Kantians now.' ... The original sin of Kantianism is ... the codification of modern man's blasphemous self-obsession, the raising of 'It's all about me' to a moral first principle.*

Indeed, many of us, in fact, take such language about freedom, dignity, and autonomy for granted—as an moral matter-of-course. Yet it is precisely this kind of philosophy that leads someone to dismiss a centuries-old moral code with a mere shake of the head, to rely on his “own personal ethics on life. . .to keep [him] going on the right path.”

The obvious objection to Fauci's statement (setting aside the incoherence of claiming to be Catholic while rejecting Catholic morality) is naturally this: But how do you know that your personal ethics *do* keep you “on the right path”? For who decides what the right path is? And what happens when millions of Americans disagree with your ethics, Dr. Fauci?

If ethical questions do not have some moral measuring rod, some objective standard, then how can any ethical question be answered? Everyone inventing their own moral code causes more chaos than suggesting that everyone decide for themselves the nature of day and night, the length of a year, or the existence of gravity. As G.K. Chesterton [wrote](#): “A cosmic philosophy is not constructed to fit a man; a cosmic philosophy is constructed to fit a cosmos. A man can no more possess a private religion than he can possess a private sun and moon.”

In traditional philosophy, morality was determined by the objective nature of things, exterior to the human mind. And the nature of things had its ultimate source in God (though “God” looked different to different philosophers), thus

providing that exterior measuring rod applicable to all people of all times. Feser describes it in this way:

*In no sense are we the source of the nature that determines our ends, including the end of reason itself; God alone is that. Hence nature, and ultimately God rather than the individual reason of the moral agent are what ground the content and obligatory force of the moral law.*

But modern man long ago began to doubt whether anything has an intrinsic nature at all (transgenderism, anyone?). We've been fooled into thinking that all we can know is externals, not the essences of things as they are. We are in Matthew Arnold's apocalyptic vision in "[Dover Beach](#)," where we think the world has no

*... certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

Without philosophical and religious certainty, then, we have groped about in the dark and gloom, for something solid to hold onto. We settled on "science" as the source for the certainty in life that we need. We have been deluded into thinking that science is the only means of obtaining objective truth, thus embracing a kind of "Scientism," a new religion in itself. As an ironic and tragic consequence, rather than achieving the promised "autonomy," we have actually become more and more enslaved to the scientific "experts," the priests of this new religion.

And there are some men who are quite happy to keep things that way.

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Image credit: [Pexels](#)