

Budziszewski's the second tablet project: an analysis essay



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In "The Second Tablet Project," J. Budziszewski explores the reasons why there is a need to connect morality with God or, at the least, why the relationship between morality and religion—especially the belief in God—is important.

Budziszewski proposes two ways of inquiring about the connection between the Second Tablet of the Decalogue and morality: one is through *sensus divinitatis* or "the spontaneous awareness of the reality of the Creator," and two is through the "biblical tradition of direct revelation" as recorded. The author seeks to establish the importance of the relationship between natural law and the knowledge of God because a person's knowledge of God enables him to find sense and responsibility towards the natural laws. While arguing against the obvious refutations against his theological position while elaborating his claims, Budziszewski is also able to establish the connection he seeks to belabor. One of the central arguments of Budziszewski is his adoption of the concept of the "abolition of man" of C.

S. Lewis. In essence, Budziszewski argues that "a godless natural law would reverse the laws of human nature" for as long as we continue to be human. Modern times have already paved the way for technologies that alter and experiment with the human anatomy. To deny our being "human" as a result of Divine creation is to lack the reasons to preserve it and to have no objection to its abolition altogether.

Thus, to have natural knowledge of God—the Divine Creator responsible for the genesis and purpose of everything—is to have the sole reason to preserve humanity and the natural law. The universe, the argument extends,

has a moral sense and is a Design, the patterns of which are products of a real intelligent agency—God. Another key example in the article is an instance in the novel *Sophie's Choice* where a Nazi orders a mother to choose one from among her children who will be sent to the ovens; otherwise both of them will be killed. Eventually, the mother decides to send her smallest daughter. Budziszewski contends that, without faith in God, the mother would not have possibly chosen any of her children. The case is paralleled to abortion where Budziszewski contends that every person is an *imago Dei* or an image of God; an unborn fetus is a person who is also by nature a human being who bears rights.

His brief discussion of the predicament of the mother in *Sophie's Choice* and abortion cases reiterates his argument that denial of duty towards God will cause one to find duty to one's neighbor as senseless. Thus, the Decalogue's First Tablet is linked to the Second Tablet. Budziszewski's article is related to the foundation of ethics in the sense that the former provides a theological background on morality. That is, the article presupposes religion—specifically an individual's knowledge of God and his appreciation of the connection between that knowledge and the precepts in the Second Tablet of the Decalogue—as the springboard of the moral codes that we have today. To be sure, there are several other theories concerning ethical foundations, each of which has its own set of proponents and arguments.

Despite all these, the thing that makes the ethical foundation of Budziszewski different from all the rest is that it rejects moral relativism while ascribing theology to the reasons why morality should not stand on its own. By attacking the moral arguments atheists, agnostics and men of <https://assignbuster.com/budziszewskis-the-second-tablet-project-an-analysis-essay/>

science espouse, Budziszewski is able to preempt or, at the least, dislodge probable refutations from these groups. Rather than indulge metaphysics in the role of ethics and natural law as (O'Keefe) does, Budziszewski gives an origin to epistemology in relation to the divine. Essentially, he suggests that without following the divine, man will follow a moral code of humanity in his own image and in doing so indulge a nihilistic existence. His rationale for this nihilism flows that if we do not have a fixed condition of idealized humanity as we do the divine, we will not be able to establish and accord to this as a moral code. He then cites examples of the changing condition of humanity in relation to contemporary science and technology.

This is ultimately why he rejects humanity as a source of morality given that it would naturally lead to moral relativism. There can be some understanding here. Even a slight cultural change can alter the scope of what we consider humanity to be. However, what is not realized in this rationale is that through moral relativism one can make a meaningful choice regardless of faith. For example, in being forced to choose within the unGodly constraint as exemplified in *Sophies Choice*, one can still make an inhumane decision. The human consequences of *Sophies Choice* can then be seen in the unbearable pain, regret and remorse.

It could therefore be said that this pain, regret and remorse is what makes us human and becomes the relative experience that guides, creates or at the very least informs our moral code. In summary, Budziszewski makes an interesting and relevant point in relation to humanity versus divine morality. However, in doing so he seems to overlook the way in which religion and

knowledge are contained within humanity and so can be said to be just as subject to shifts in humanity as humanity and natural law is itself.