

Dear Peucinians,

Few questions define our era quite like the one that we will address this week.

Resolved: Humanism ought replace religion as a common source of morality.

Affirmative: Tracey Faber '16

Negative: Isaiah Berlin '14

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche famously declares that "God is dead." However, a protracted struggle for the soul of Western civilization has since ensued. The two American continents have been especially uncooperative with Nietzsche's assertion. Religious revivals in a multiplicity of denominations have sprung up time and again. And, if we look eastward, Islam's hold on Asia and a good deal of Africa seems nearly unshakeable. So much, then, for the petering out of religion.

And yet, whether influenced by Nietzsche or not, religion is on the outs in many corners of our world. Since the downfall of Soviet communism, the culprit that bears the greatest responsibility for the contemporary challenge to religion is called 'humanism.' Generally speaking, humanism asserts that revelation is unnecessary and even harmful for the moral upkeep of humanity. Rather than through looking to religion, humanists are often of the opinion that we can find morality through intuition - that humans have some innate moral sense. Essentially, it is possible to decipher what is right and what is wrong through a process of socialization.

Meanwhile, even if Nietzsche's total immoralism is not one of the options that we will consider this week, his contention that the Bible is requisite for the maintenance of Biblical morality is very much a relevant point. Modern proponents of religion will argue that without a religious institution to form the social and moral epicenter, society is left to be ransacked by the licentiousness of its citizens. Humanism, it could be argued, can only provide a hollow echo of the camaraderie and sense of purpose supplied by religion.

Can we have a moral direction without religion? Is it progressive or blasphemous to argue for trans-religious spiritual harmony and consensus? Can religions evolve along with modern sensibilities? Is it fair to expect them to? Is humanism just a cowardly alternative to looking into the abyss? *What say you?*

Please join the Peucinian Society this Thursday, April 4 at 7:30pm in the Faculty Room of Massachusetts Hall. Dress well.

Perplexedly yours,
Maimonides