

Why Do You Care?

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Genesis 2:7

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You are on a cruise. Two miles away from land the ship begins to sink. Everyone needs to abandon ship. Life rafts are lowered into the water, but the one you are in hits the side of the ship and is damaged. When it hits the water, it begins to sink. There are ten of you in the boat, and you all furiously begin to bail water. It's determined that with all passenger bailing, the life raft will stay afloat for 5 hours. After that, the boat will sink and everyone on board will drown.

As you glance around at the other life rafts, you see a friend signaling for you to jump out and swim to his boat, ensuring your survival. His life raft is drifting away quickly because of the current, and you only have 30 seconds to make up your mind. If you leave, the remaining people in your raft will not be able to stay ahead of the leaking water, and will only stay afloat for 2 hours.

So, the moral dilemma is this; Do you stay on your current boat and help keep it afloat as long as possible and hope that the rescue will arrive in 5 hours, or do you go to your friends boat, ensuring your rescue, but reducing the chances of the others on the boat being rescued?

If you're like me you want to know more facts. For instance, what kind of Life Raft is it? And is there any rope or other materials that might be used to keep the raft from sinking? Couldn't the other life rafts paddle alongside the disabled one and lash themselves together? Lots of questions come to mind. You can't decide because you are not there.

This is a classic example of what society calls a Moral Dilemma. Philosophers have been using these for thousands of years to determine which way society's moral compass is pointing. But for me philosophy doesn't even enter the equation. For me the fact that humanity even wrestles with Moral Dilemmas points heavenward to God; for among all of creation, only humanity wrestles with a sense of Right and Wrong. Only humanity would agonize over a decision to abandon others in pursuit of personal safety. And for the life of me, I can't imagine how this "Morality" evolved.

Inside the human body are nerve cells. They're different than blood cells or skin cells. A nerve cell (or Neuron) has tiny extensions that connect to other nerve cells. And each of these cells transfers information throughout the body by a chemical process that actually produces electricity (call me "Copper Top"). At rest the voltage in a cell is -70 millivolts. But when the brain sends a signal or the skin responds to stimulus, the voltage in a nerve cell spikes to +30 millivolts. A chain reaction begins with each cell responding to the stimulated input, performing its own chemical reaction, and then transferring this voltage spike to the next nerve cell. In some instances these signals travel over 350 feet per second. In what seems to be an instant, the hand touches the hot stove, the skin reacts, sends a signal to the nerve cells at your fingertip, which begins a chemical process that causes a voltage spike, which travels at about 200 miles per hour to the brain, which records the sensation as "Hot", then begins a chemical reaction to the muscles in the arm to jerk away.

The nerve cells in your brain are slightly different. Instead of transferring these electrical charges, they "Store" them. As best as scientists can tell, a brain cell forms a memory by storing a specific chemical combination. And as it connects with neighboring cells, who store a slightly different chemical combination, a "Memory" is formed. One Brain cell recognizes the shape of an object and says "Pen". Another cell recognizes the color and says "Gray". Other cells send signals to the hand that instruct the muscles how to hold the pen and how to move in order to form letters. So your memories are not stored in a single cell, but in a grouping of brain cells, each containing a certain chemical combination that, when combined, forms a memory.

I find it interesting that in the brain it's a combination of Potassium, Sodium, Calcium, and Chloride that form our memories. But what no one seems able to explain rationally is how a combination of 4 chemicals can bring us to tears or make us laugh. How can a simple chemical process generate a feeling like love or fear? How can these chemical storehouses in the brain cause us to think of God when we hear a beautiful symphony or see a beautiful sunset? How can a chemical process cause us to stay in the life boat in order to save a complete stranger?

Some have tried to explain this biologically; that it is part of our DNA. Research Biologist John Evans has popularized what has become known as the “God Gene”. “Compare a strand of human DNA with that of a chimp, and you’ll notice a striking difference”, he says. This difference is what gives humanity our morality, love, spirituality, and all things that make us appreciate the world we live in. But I’m not convinced it is something tangible; something that can be seen. Consider what the Creation account has to say about this part of humanity.

Chapter one of Genesis presents a wide-angle view of Creation. In chapter two the story zooms in on the events that happened on day six. In reference to the Man, Genesis says, “*Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.*”¹ (Genesis 2:7). We are not just alive, we are living beings, says God. And because of this God set Mankind above the rest of the world as stewards. We are to care for this world because, apart from the rest of creation, humanity CAN care. We feel responsible for this world and all that is in it not because these feelings evolved, but because God cares. And He “breathed” that same spirit of caring into humanity.

Apart from the rest of creation, God formed Man in His own image and in His own likeness (Genesis 1:26). Like the rest of creation, we are physical beings. Like the rest of the animals we have intellect and personality (our soul). But we alone have a spirit; something intangible that has been given to us by God. And whether humanity wants to admit this or not, we all have a spirit breathed into us by the mouth of God. We are beings that have been granted a sense of right or wrong.

This spirit; this morality, is not something that can be discovered through a telescope or a microscope. The universe does not function with an Ethical code of conduct. It does not struggle with issues of Morality. Morality, Man’s spirit that causes us to care and to love and to laugh and to cry, is something than can only be seen by observing the behavior of men and women. So the next time you see someone give or care or provide for the needs of someone they don’t even know, it is far more than a chemical process taking place in their brain. It is evidence that they are driven by the invisible spirit breathed into them by the mouth of God.

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2007). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. (3rd ed.) (Ge 2:7). Carol Stream, IL