MAY 4, 2013 THESKEPTICARENA.COM

Dear Fellow Atheists: Stop Being Jerks

by Don Rasmussen

*As the great libertarian philosopher John Locke rightly observed, liberty requires tolerance.*

Don, Locke did not mean absolute tolerance. Tolerance for slavery, rape, or pedophilia is certainly not required for liberty. That's where your thinking is going off the rails.

*It’s the only way the whole notion of a free people can operate. Without tolerance, politics becomes Balkanized into factions of competing interests*

Don, in any society, with or without tolerance, politics will always be divided into competing interests. That is just the nature of society.

First you confused tolerance with absolute tolerance; then you tried to claim that tolerance would somehow be able to bypass the very nature of society.

You are not off to a very impressive start, Don.

*that inevitably lead to less freedom as each victory or defeat for any “side” slowly chips away at individual choice.*

Don, why would a decision in favor of one side necessarily chip away at individual choice? Not all decisions involve individual choice.

*Most people see smoking bans as a good thing,*

Don, smoking isn't banned. It is prohibited in certain areas such as hospitals, restaurants, and other indoor places where large numbers of people congregate and may be affected by smoke; but that is not the same thing as banning smoking.

A similar situation exists with alcohol. Alcohol is not banned. It is simply prohibited in certain places; most notably while driving.

*but not only are private property and private choice diminished,*

Don, it is inevitable that private rights will be diminished in any society when those rights negatively impact other members of that society.

Don, why do you need to be told such simple concepts?

*the individual act of expressing grace and tolerance towards fellow citizens is replaced by a dictate that perverts that interaction and undermines freedom.*

Don, what the hell does that even mean? What "dictate?"

*Why be nice and seek accommodation when you can impose your belief with the force of law and the threat of state violence on anyone who disagrees?*

Don, it depends on the nature of that disagreement. When a rapist and his victim disagree over her freedom to resist, the force of law and the threat of state violence should be imposed.

*Excessive laws make us less tolerant, less civil and less civilized over time.*

Don, depends what you mean by "excessive laws." Do you mean too many laws? Or that the laws themselves are excessive?

What is an example of an excessive law?

*Now multiply that cultural effect across thousands of laws now on the book whose only function is to replace tolerance with dictate, choice with obligation, and self-interest with state interest.*

Don, you said there were thousands of such laws. Perhaps you could give us an example of a law whose only function was to replace "tolerance with dictate?" Or "self-interest with state interest?"

Then we could discuss why such a law was deemed necessary.

*So it is with the absurd effort of atheists and agnostics to ban everything that isn’t rigidly non-religious according to their worldview.*

Don, I'm aware of nonbelievers trying to ban religious things that violate our Constitution. Perhaps you would give us an example of nonbelievers trying to ban something simply because they disagree with it?

*This makes me crazy*

Don, I don't find this essay "crazy." I find it illogical and poorly thought out. In other words, it has a long way to go before it could even rise to the level of crazy.

*because, as an agnostic myself,*

Don, have you considered accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? I think you should because, we don't really need someone with a mind as debilitated as yours on our side. Heck, I hear Islam is in the market for someone like you. Have you thought of giving Allah a try?

*I get linked to these sad, angry jerks who never read John Locke.*

Well Don, not everyone can be as well read as you. Personally, I prefer Ian Fleming - far more entertaining.

*I live in a state that’s 90% Christian.*

Don, forget the Islam suggestion. Go with Jesus. As small a group as we nonbelievers are, we are not desperate enough to want someone as, how to put this nicely, oh screw it, as idiotic as you.

*Should their rights, freedoms and liberties be curtailed to accommodate my non-practicing butt?*

Don, that all depends on which rights, freedoms, and liberties you are talking about. I think we can both agree that their religious freedom to stone to death your non-practicing butt is probably one freedom that should be curtailed.

However, I am reserving a final decision on that until we get to the end of this essay, and based on what I've read so far, I think they would be justified in starting to collect the stones.

*I extend my grace to everyone around me*

Don, if you really want to extend your grace to everyone around you, you might want to consider giving up writing, and take up something more within your ability range, like ... catering.

*because I expect, or at least hope for, the same in return.*

Don, unfortunately not everyone in society feels that way. There are millions of violent felons who don't really care what you expect in return.

*How can I ask 27 million Texans*

Don, Texas? Why am I not surprised?

The biggest mistake we ever made, was not letting Mexico have Texas. Just kidding Don. Since Texas is ours, it is our responsibility to fix it ... not throw it out.

*to put up with me if I act like they not only disgust me, but I’m entitled to legislate my disgust upon them?*

Don, so what legislation are you claiming has been passed that allows you to heap your disgust upon religious believers?

Could you name one?

They consider bills that prevent them from discriminating against gays to be legislating disgust against them. They consider bills that protect a woman's right to choose to be legislating disgust against them. Obviously ... you agree.

*How many nativity scenes have to be banned before Christians accept me?*

Don, nativity scenes are only banned when they are displayed in violation of the Constitution. And why would banning a certain number of nativity scenes encourage Christians to accept you?

Your logic, if one could call it that, really lost me on that one.

*It’s a ridiculous strategy that makes enemies, divides people and carves up freedom;*

Don, enforcing our laws often has the effect of making enemies of those who violate them. As for dividing people, they are already divided - that is one of the main purposes of all religions. And how do you figure freedom is carved up by preventing people from violating our Constitution?

Don, do you ever think any of this crap out before you write it?

Guess not.

*According to Gallup,*

Don, Gallup is a propaganda outlet for American Evangelicals just like Fox News. Why would an agnostic like you, quote them?

Don, remember the 2012 election when Gallup humiliated itself, and exposed its true agenda, by predicting a Romney landslide, in an unsuccessful effort to rally the troops?

I do.

*the number of Americans who identify as having no religion has doubled since 1989. The “non” movement needs to take a moment now, in this incredible growth period to ask what it wants to be. Should the non-religious represent the same intolerance and authoritarianism that they have complained about from the Christian Right and the Statist Left for years?*

Sure Don, let's show'em what it feels like.

Come on Don, another silly question? that can only mean ... another silly illogical conclusion.

*Should we seek to limit and curtail as much freedom as possible to alleviate our own insecurities about being a distrusted minority?*

Don, why do you assume that limiting their freedom would alleviate our insecurities? Has limiting our freedoms alleviated theirs? Obviously not.

*How is any agnostic or atheist materially diminished by people of faith enjoying their freedom?*

Don, do you ever read the newspaper? Or watch TV news?

How could you even ask such a stupid question?

The enjoyment of their freedoms always seems to involve, the restrictions of their fellow citizens ... to enjoy theirs.

*I understand religious bigotry as most agnostics/atheists do.*

Don, this essay proves otherwise.

*A blind date once doused me with a beer upon learning I didn’t share her religion.*

Don, so which side did you see as intolerant in that situation?

*I have had a marriage proposal refused because her parents wouldn’t accept their daughter marrying a non-Christian.*

Don, same question as before. Nearly all the intolerance comes from the religious side: always has ... and likely always will.

*I recently lost out on a high profile, high paying political job because the politician in question “had concerns” about having a non in the office…they have daily prayers, you see, and “it would just be uncomfortable for everyone.”*

Don, you're doing a great job of refuting your own essay. If I knew you were going to demolish your entire position yourself, I could have saved my breath.

*Yet it has never occurred to Me to respond by suing, filing charges, or otherwise throwing a fit about it.*

That's very big of you Don. I'm sure they were just devastated when you curled your tail between your legs and scurried away in defeat.

*I have told people with views I disagree with to pike off. I have refused to hire people for a variety of reasons, and there are lots of educated, accomplished women who share my religious skepticism that I can date. I don’t need a lawsuit and I don’t need anyone to be forced to accept me or love me, I have family for that and they’re stuck with me. Everyone else is off of the hook.*

Don, if your family is forced to accept and love you, maybe you're not as well liked as you imagine.

*So if you too are a religious skeptic, critic, even enemy, ask yourself what you really gain by demanding and supporting the dismantling of Constitutional freedom to satisfy your own worldview;*

Don, you couldn't have it more backwards if you tried. It is the Evangelicals who are doing everything in their power to dismantle Constitutional freedom to satisfy their worldview. As an agnostic you, of all people, should know that.

Don, I get the impression that you're about as much a nonbeliever as S.E. Cupp ... and I don't buy her line either.

http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/dear-fellow-atheists-stop-being-jerks/

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

How Did Early Primordial Cells Evolve?

Four billion years ago, soon after the planet cooled enough for life to begin, primordial cells may have replicated and divided without protein machinery or cell walls, relying instead on just a flimsy lipid membrane. New research on bacteria examines exactly how these primitive cells could have evolved without such crucial structures.

While the vast majority of bacteria have cell walls, many bacteria can switch to a wall-free existence called the L-form state, which could mirror the structure of primordial cells. A study reveals how bacteria in this L-form state divide and proliferate, shedding light on how the earliest forms of cellular life may have replicated.

The main surprise was how simple the mechanism was. It doesn't require any sophisticated protein-based machinery. This makes it plausible as an explanation for how very primitive cells could have proliferated in the very early days of evolution.

The cell wall is a layered structure surrounding cells that protects them and maintains their shape. It is present in all known major bacterial lineages, and it was also probably present in the last common ancestor of bacteria. This structure is so important that it is targeted by antibiotics, and many bacteria responsible for infectious diseases can switch to the L-form state to resist antibiotics.

Perhaps the most striking change associated with the L-form state is the way that the bacteria replicate. Instead of relying on precise, complicated cell division machinery, L-form bacteria become irregularly shaped and form cell surface bulges that pinch off to become daughter cells. Although genetic mutations associated with the L-form state have been identified, little is known about the molecular mechanisms underlying L-form replication.

Researchers identified two genetic changes required for L-form growth in bacteria. One of these mutations was necessary for the increased production of fatty acids in the cell membrane, which would be expected to increase the cell's surface area relative to its volume. Indeed, the researchers found that by artificially increasing cell surface area, they could induce L-form-like shape changes and cell division. The findings suggest that a simple biophysical change -- an imbalance between surface area and volume -- underlies L-form cell division.

This study paves the way for understanding how L-form bacteria cause disease and resist antibiotics. It also offers a model system for future experiments aimed at exploring the possible replication mechanisms of primitive cells that could have existed before the explosion of bacterial life on the planet nearly four billion years ago.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

Steve Grand (1958) 55 years old.

He is an English computer scientist and an internationally recognised roboticist. He was the creator and lead programmer of the Creatures artificial life simulation, which he discussed in his first book Creation: Life and how to make it.

Grand's project from 2001-2006 was the building of an artificial robot baby orangutan, with the intention of having it learn as a human baby would. This is documented in his book Growing up with Lucy.

"Think of an experience from your childhood.

Something you remember clearly, something you can see,

feel, maybe even smell, as if you were really there.

After all, you really were there at the time, weren't you?

How else would you remember it?

But here is the bombshell: you weren't there.

Not a single atom that is in your body today

was there when that event took place ...

Matter flows from place to place

and momentarily comes together to be you.

Whatever you are, therefore,

you are not the stuff of which you were made."