TEN UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES

A Primer in Logic, Ethics, and Justice

1. PRINCIPLE OF BENEFICENCE (THE GOLDEN RULE)

"Ultimate meaning, purpose, and happiness comes from doing the greatest good with your life."

Human beings find ultimate fulfillment through participating in and receiving ultimate Truth, Love, Goodness, Beauty, and Home. (See the "Four Levels of Happiness" sidebar on the back)

VIOLATION: Pursuing a lower level of happiness at the cost of a higher level, such as having an abortion to pursue a job promotion.

2. PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION

"Something cannot be both X and not-X in the same respect at the same place and time."

VIOLATION: "The fetus is a person for you, but not for me." Two observers having differing viewpoints cannot cause a fetus to be a "person/not-person" in the same respect at the same place and time. One of them must be wrong.

3. PRINCIPLE OF COMPLETE EXPLANATION

"The best explanation is the one that accounts for the most data."

VIOLATION: "The embryo is not a person because it doesn't look human." Appearances offer insufficient data for defining human persons. The fetus contains not only a complete human genome, but also a very real present and future potential for participating in the human and divine community of love, just as adolescents and adults do.

4. PRINCIPLE OF OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE

"For a claim to be considered reasonable, you must provide evidence that can be verified by others."

If claim is arbitrarily asserted without evidence, then it can be arbitrarily denied without evidence.

VIOLATION: "Disabled people cannot live meaningful lives." There is no publicly verifiable evidence to support this claim.

5. PRINCIPLE OF NON-MALEFICENCE (THE SILVER RULE)

"Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you."
(When in doubt, avoid harm.)

VIOLATION: "Since society is uncertain about whether the fetus is a human person, it is best to err on the side of assuming it is not." Since the harm caused by this assumption is ultimate and irreversible (death), one must err in the other direction (i.e., assume the fetus is a person unless it can be proven otherwise).

6. PRINCIPLE OF CONSISTENT ENDS AND MEANS

"The ends do not justify the means." (You cannot use an evil method to achieve a good result.)

VIOLATION: "The doctor used embryonic stem cells to treat the woman's disease." The grave harm of killing an embryonic person to extract stem cells does not justify the good that may come from curing someone else's disease. (NOTE: the use of adult stem cells shows far more promise, and does not require killing the host to extract the cells.)

WHY DO WE NEED PRINCIPLES?

A principle is a fundamental truth that guides people in how to think, act, and make good choices. The ten principles listed here are essential for any civilization to exist. Without any one of them, a civilization will eventually collapse.

If a person decides that love and service to others and/or to God is more important in life than material pleasure or ego gratification, that person will likely value these ten principles, and will even see them as inviolable. However, if a person chooses material pleasure or ego gratification as the meaning of life, these principles will seem obtrusive, burdensome, and even counterproductive.

The shaded box on the back of this page lays out four different ways that human beings can define meaning and purpose in life, or "four levels of happiness." If one chooses to live for levels 3 and/or 4, it should become apparent that we must uphold these principles in every circumstance.

HEALING THE CULTURE

7. PRINCIPLE OF FULL HUMAN POTENTIAL

"You cannot judge the intrinsic worth of an individual or group by the development they have achieved at a particular point in time; only by what they are capable of achieving at their highest potential."

VIOLATION: "Because it is not fully developed, the fetus is not worth as much as the adult." Intrinsic human worth is grounded in our potential to give and receive love. Since human fetuses have this potential, they have intrinsic worth.

8. PRINCIPLE OF NATURAL RIGHTS

"Every human being has fundamental rights which are theirs by nature, and which are not dependent on any outside source for validation. These rights are inalienable—they cannot be removed."

VIOLATION: "Fetuses don't have a right to life because some states have declared them to be nonpersons." No court has the jurisdiction to nullify fundamental human rights. Natural human rights belong to human beings by their existence. To be legitimate, government is obliged to protect natural rights, and does not have the authority to cancel them.

9. PRINCIPLE OF THE HIERARCHY OF RIGHTS

"Any right which is a necessary condition for the very possibility of another right's existence is the more fundamental right. The more fundamental right should take priority in any conflict of rights."

VIOLATION: "Abortion is necessary to protect a woman's liberty interests." Life is a condition necessary for the very possibility of liberty, and so it is a more fundamental right. Life must be protected first.

10. PRINCIPLE OF LIMITS TO FREEDOM

"Establishing a new right for some is illegitimate if it becomes a burdensome duty for others." (One person's right cannot become another person's duty to die, suffer, or be unduly burdened.)

VIOLATION: "Terminally ill people who freely choose suicide should have the right to a physician's assistance." Even if it were true that some people could make a "free choice" to commit suicide, the number of vulnerable persons who would become victims of that option is vast. For example, patients who are lonely, elderly, poor, uninsured, disabled, in a minority, or who have low self-esteem or even ill-intentioned relatives may feel pressured to die because they are a burden.

FOUR LEVELS OF HAPPINESS

LEVEL 1 Physical Pleasure and Possessions

Comes from an external stimulus, like the warm sun or a sweet ice cream. Interacts with one or more of the five senses. Offers immediate gratification. Does not require skill or training. Is concrete, direct, tangible, and often quite intense.

CRISIS LEVEL 1: Does not extend beyond myself, does not last long, and does not use my higher powers. Therefore, I eventually become bored and empty, and feel as though I am living beneath myself.

LEVEL 2 Ego-Gratification

Comes from achievement, winning, power, and popularity. Requires skill and control, and seeks comparative advantage. Short term gratification.

CRISIS LEVEL 2: Does not extend beyond myself, does not last long, and does not use my higher powers. Leads to jealousy, fear of failure, aggression, ego-sensitivity, blame, rage, self-pity, inferiority, superiority, suspicion, bitterness, contempt, resentment.

LEVEL 3 Good Beyond Self

Comes from doing a greater good beyond myself, and being with others in empathy. Seeks to satisfy the human desire for truth, love, justice, beauty, and home. Extends beyond myself, offers long term gratification, and uses my higher powers.

CRISIS LEVEL 3: Our desire for perfect, absolute, infinite, and eternal Truth, Love, Justice, Beauty, and Home cannot be fulfilled by this world. Leads to frustration, dashed expectations, angst, and despair.

LEVEL 4 Ultimate Good

Comes from receiving and participating in ultimate (perfect, absolute, infinite, and eternal) Truth, Love, Justice, Beauty, and Home. Can only be achieved by believing that ultimate Truth, Love, Justice, Beauty, and Home exists as a reality (God). Extends beyond myself infinitely, is eternally enduring, and infinitely deep.

CRISIS LEVEL 4: Can be avoided to the extent that I practice humble surrender to God's love through prayer, and allow Him to come to me. Among the crises that can be experienced is refusing to allow God to come to me, and trying to get to Him by myself (which is impossible).

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