

Casey McCarthy
Response to Masterpiece Cake case
December 2017

This is an ethical, ontological, and sociological query that bears close examination.

To me it comes down to a very important dialectic which sits central to many of the themes we are seeing in our sociopolitical environment. This being a call for secular humanism vs. religious expression as the modus operandi for resolution of conflicts. In my opinion, our society is trying to move in the direction of compassion, kindness, and mutual acceptance for a myriad of life experiences by adopting a stance of personal accountability and responsibility for one's actions towards other people. This in conjunction with a socially enforced paradigm favoring rejection of bigotry and closed minded thinking...on the progressive end at any rate. This is reflected in everything from the success of dialectical behavioral therapy as a best practice in mental health, to anti discriminatory policies in human resources departments.

For organizational purposes I will break my statement from here into three sections, these being sociological, legal, and theological

Sociological

As stated above, we live in a society currently that is at the crux of a large dichotomy, which I believe, was largely informed by the intervention of humanism and existentialism into mass consciousness. as Nietzsche said "god is dead and we have killed him". That is to say that the progressive moral imperative in our society has moved from an external locus, to an internal one. Much of our larger social climate has shifted to accommodate a perspective of acceptance of personal responsibility for our actions in reference to bigotry in all of its iterations; whereas the strictly religious extremists still cling to an external view of authority. We are seeing a terrible upsurge in regressive thinking which wants to place the authority back on an externalized viewpoint. Rather than looking at themselves and going through the pain of realization of personal responsibility for what their privilege has cost the rest of humanity; these people would rather bury their heads back in the sand and give their autonomy over to "god" (or, in my opinion, the state). This isn't just Christians either. I have seen this all over the Norse Heathen community, where Odin has become a mere surrogate for hell fire and brimstone evangelicalism under the guise of Heathenry.

Legal

As stated earlier, many of our laws have come to reflect a stance of anti-discrimination. One of the key points of this proceeding is that the cake maker, did in fact, violate the law. He was found to have been in violation in a court proceeding which cited specific legality in terms of business and anti-discrimination law. This, to me, sits at the exact center of the aforementioned dichotomy in which he is favoring an external religious authority in his decision making process, instead of taking responsibility for his own hatred. Again we see the emergence of an external vs. an internal locus of responsibility.

Theological

As a practicing religious polytheist, I am all for defending religious freedoms, including freedom of speech. That being said, I truly believe that every religion that ever was has a theology of love and inter-connectivity that sits central to the core belief system. To position one's self as a religious practitioner is to accept the tenets and doctrines of faith. If at that core of practice is love and developing greater awareness then, I believe, you are in direct violation of the teachings of the very religion you yourself are touting if you support bigotry. When all is said and done, my personal beliefs posit that I try to be a loving and compassionate human being first, and let that inform my religious practice, not the other way around. You don't get to claim religious exemption from anything that involves causing harm to others.