Religion & Morality

(DaleHathaway)

## DaleHathaway

## Fall 2020

Created: 2020-07-25 Sat 14:29

## Table of Contents

* [Definitions](#/slide-org423a40b)
* [Defining Morality](#/slide-orgeef1d5d)
* [Ethics](#/slide-org28b395c)

## Definitions

### The Foundation for Morality

* Many people claim that religion is the **foundation for all morality**.
* In this way, it is religion that teaches people what is good or right or praiseworthy.
* For some religious traditions, the phrase "obey the commands of God" expresses the highest standard of the moral life.
* But this claim raises the key questions (first posed by Socrates): "**Do the gods love the good because it is good, or is it good because the gods love it?**"

## Defining Morality

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Religion | Morality |
| "Religion" refers to ways of thinking that refer to a notion of sacred reality. | "Morality" may be taken to refer to ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that address considerations of human welfare. |

Note:

As some scholars put it, religious considerations lead one to think in "sacred-regarding" terms, moral considerations in "other-regarding" terms.

### Priority of Religion or Morality?

* Religion and morality are interconnected, but **religion and morality can also conflict**.
* If such conflicts occur, which is to have priority?

A classic example was set in mid-20th c. US where Martin Luther King Jr. knew full well that the "civil disobedience" he led was contrary to the prevailing ethics (and laws) of the time. He understood, however, that a higher principle was at stake. The higher principle derived from the prophetic tradition of the Bible.

### Abraham

Note:

**Consider the moral problems raised by the biblical story of Abraham. Common to all 3 Religions of Abraham**

Note: In the story, God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a way of testing Abraham's faith.

### Soren Kiekegaard

* Kierkegaard analyzed the story of Abraham as a **paradox between Abraham's two "loves" – his son and God**.
* Abraham was (evidently) willing to sacrifice his son at God's command, which indicates that his love of God took priority.
* Thus, Abraham was a true "**knight of faith**."
* Abraham's love for God is an example of the **religious point of view taking priority over the moral**.

### Immanuel Kant

* Kant takes the opposite position of Kierkegaard.
* Kant argued that if anyone thinks he or she hears a command like that of Abraham's, it is **obligatory to ignore or renounce that directive**.
* Thus, the positions of Kant and Kierkegaard present two sides of the questions about which should take priority, religion or morality, in cases of conflict.
* [Overview of Categorical Imperative](http://www.csus.edu/indiv/g/gaskilld/ethics/kantian%20ethics.htm) 1st formulation of which is: "**Act only in such a way that one can at the same time will that it should become a universal law**."

Note:

This could be an exercise: Consider the discussion question from SQ (130)

The Muslim theologian al-Ash'ari (d. 935 CE) argued that the only sure basis for moral knowledge was the command of God made known in revealed texts such as the Qur'an. He argued that God was the Supreme Lord of the worlds, whose commands were always to be obeyed; and he went on to say that if God commanded human beings to lie, then lying would be obligatory. Does this seem right to you? Why or why not? What view of the religion–morality relation is suggested by al-Ash'ari's comment?

## Ethics

* What does it mean to live well?
* Is a given course of action right or wrong?
* What standards should be used in evaluating particular acts or the persons who engage in them?
* [Discussion of moral justification for bombing Syria](http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/13/politics/syria-religious-justified/index.html)

Note:

* The discussion of the relations between religion and morality is a part of the general study of ethics or the inquiry into the nature of the good life.
* The study of ethics focuses on such questions and involves an attempt to develop theories of the nature and foundation of human judgment.

### Justification

* **justification** – or reasons for action
* **practical justification** = advancing reasons in support of a particular action
* **religious reasons** may or may not be advanced

Note:

* Underlying all of these issues is the problem of practical justification, or the question of reasons for action.
* Practical justification involves the process of **advancing reasons in support of a particular action**.
* Religious reasons may or may not be advanced as a part of the practical justification.
* Consider, for example, the practical justifications that might be advanced on each side of the abortion debate.

Justification - In any given case of action or judgment about the rightness of action, then, it is possible to ask for reasons. - The attempt to provide reasons for actions and judgments involves persons and groups in the process of practical justification. - The example of the arguments surrounding abortion presents one illustration of such a process.

### Deontological Approach to Opposing legal and safe abortions

* δεοn = "necessary, or duty"
* An appeal to **duty**.
* one ought to do something **regardless of the consequences**

Note:

* consider the 10 commandments:
* The issue is one of formal adherence to a given standard of action, **regardless of the good or bad consequences** that follow.
* Examples:
  + Abortion is wrong because it violates the rule "Thou shalt not kill."
  + Abortion is wrong because it violates the command of God.
* On the other hand
* Deontological approach to Favoring legal and safe abortions
* a person has an inherent right to control over his/her own body
* another person does not have a right to make decisions for another over control of his/her own body
* even as one grants full status as a "human person" to the unborn fetus, the mother also has a full status as a "human person", i.e. "**no one human being may be reduced to the status of a mere instrument in order to serve the needs of another human being**"

"A defense of abortion" by Judith Jarvis Thomson

### 10 c's

### Conditional Commandments Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 8:1

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors.

### Teleological Approach to Opposing legal and safe abortions

* τελος = "end" or "goal"
* An appeal to **consequences**.

Note:

* Examples:
  + If we say that some abortions are justified, we will open the door to many wrongful killings.
  + If we permit abortion, it will make us less sensitive to the killing of innocents in other areas of action—abortion leads to euthanasia, which leads to doing away with 'surplus people,' which leads to the Holocaust.

On the other hand

* Teleogical issues to Favoring legal and safe abortions

Granting the sanctity of life, the following consequences are not negligible:

* pregnancy resulting from rape
* pregnancy that threatens the life of the mother
* an unwanted pregnancy may result in a serious detriment to the child's future well-being

Created by Dale Hathaway.