Religion, Morality, and Conscience – John Arthur

Review Questions:

1. According to Arthur, how are morality and religion different?

Morality is to evaluate the behavior of others and to feel guilt at certain actions when we perform them. While religion are beliefs in supernatural powers that created and perhaps also controls nature.

1. Why isn’t religion necessary for moral motivation?

Religion is not necessary for moral motivation because it focuses on moral guidance and knowledge rather than on people’s motives. In addition to that, religous motives are far from the only ones people have.

1. Why isn’t religion necessary as a source of moral knowledge?

Religion is not necessary as a source of moral knowledge because the understanding of what God has revealed is itself dependent on their prior moral views.

1. What is the divine command theory? Why does Arthur reject this theory?

The divine command theory views that religion is necessary for morality because without God there could be no right and wrong. God provides the foundation and bedrock on which morality is grounded. Arthur rejects this theory because he thinks that morality is also possible without any foundations at all. It claims that it should be ignored in favor of whatever serves our own self-interest.

1. According to Arthur, how are morality and religion connected?

Morality and religion are connected when religious people think that relationship extends to the personal level to their understanding of moral obligations as well as their sense of who they are and their vision of who they wish to be.

1. Dewey says that morality is social. What does this mean, according to Arthur?

According to Arthur this means that the assembly that Dewey is describing is not an actual one but instead an hypothetical, ideal one; the actual community without is transformed into a forum and tribunal within, a judgement seat of charges, assessments and exculpations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Has Arthur refuted the divine command theory? If not, how can it be defended?

No, because God becomes our source of morality. We take from there what is right and what is wrong.

1. If morality is social, as Dewey says, then how can we have any obligations to nonhuman animals?

Duties to animals rest on sympathy and compassion while human moral relations are more like what Dewey have said.

1. What does Dewey mean by moral education? Does a college ethics class count as moral education?

Moral education means that you know what is right and what is wrong. Yes, I think college ethics class count as moral education.