

Morality

## MORALITY

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### INTRODUCTION

Morality is a type of belief that, like faith, does not rest on logic or fact.

Morality, like all normativity, is a human construction; it comprises the norms of conduct of society.

Morality has to do with how people should treat each other.

Morality is a human condition; humans give morality to the world. Nature is amoral and does not reward either moral or immoral qualities, but one would think that a moral sense would have an adaptive payoff.

### DISCUSSION

Morality means taking responsibility for one's own actions.

Of all the creatures, only humans have moral responsibilities towards, other humans, non-humans (animals), and the environment.

Moral agency is not something that can be captured by machines.

Humans have the moral obligation not to cause gratuitous suffering, both in other humans and animals.

## Morality

Our moral duties to others constitutes a special relation.

Morality is supposed to be impartial and fair. Morality from a religious viewpoint is never impartial; for example, Christian morality has a different viewpoint than Muslim morality, and they are hardly fair to each other.

Morality is connected with doing the right thing as defined by the society in which we live.

Popular belief equates morality with religious morality.

There have been few scientific studies of morality in spite of its current relevance to World affairs. Morals are too important to be left in religious hands alone; morality tied to faith has shown to be a deadly combination throughout history.

A morality not based on religion remains alien to popular culture, even though fewer and fewer people are now practicing formal religion. We must adapt secular moral standards sans religion if humans are to survive; we simply cannot make it the old way. Establishing a new form of morality will take generations so we must begin now; the conflict is only getting worse.

Morality changes by creating it anew as the situation at hand changes.

Our morality does go hand and hand with our system of beliefs. We all have a general feeling of rightness or wrongness based on our beliefs and prior experience, i.e., where rightness is rewarded and wrongness punished.

Morals are used by religion to attain group solidarity, not to improve and pacify the World.

## Morality

Our moral values, or lack of them, are deeply internalized. They determine our personalities, character, emotions, motivations, behaviors, etc.

It is amazing how intelligent human beings can be so indifferent to the importance of morals and to the risk of leaving them in the hands of religion.

The same conceptual framework used for thinking can be used for the creation of morals; morals based on the representation of reality not faith.

A good person and a person who tries to be good may have very different mentalities.

Morality is largely centered on symbolic acts and like other symbolic systems has many versions.

This chain of belief has also been modified over the years to fit contemporary thinking, i.e., equal-rights, freedom of speech, science, etc.

The purpose of morality is not to civilize the soul as religion would have us believe, but to civilize society and to assist human survival on Earth. Morals are necessary to the survivability of both civilization and the human species.

We know from experience that genetics, education, culture, and socialization greatly influence human character and actions.

## RELIGION

## Morality

Morality is not the sole purview of religion although it has been largely seen in this way, which is extremely unfortunate. The need to behave in a moral manner, live a 'good' life, etc., has nothing to do with religion; it is a social necessity. Our morals are overwhelmingly the product of cultural evolution. Cultural evolution has given humans a general sense of right and wrong and the will to do something about injustice and cruelty. Religion has taken advantage of this natural capacity claiming authority over it. The problem is, different religions have very different (their own) versions of morality and go about creating blind obedience to them. The innate propensity of humans, like many other creatures, to submit to authority may well provide the underpinnings for the imposition of such religious beliefs.

Morality is most often based on the beliefs of organized religions, which in turn are based on belief in "the written word," which in turn is based on the belief of century old writers, and so on.

The historical moral beliefs of organized religions have created holy wars, inquisitions, crusades, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other heinous acts. These are hardly the moral beliefs most people feel comfortable with today, which is why many are looking away from organized ritual and biblical scripture in their quest for morality.

Morality has become extremely shallow and largely symbolic.

Religion would like us believe that all good emanates from God and all evil comes from the devil, or Satan. The religious mistakenly believe that morality cannot exist in a purely secular setting, i.e., morality cannot exist independently of religious commandments.

There is nothing inherently immoral about humans in a completely natural, non-religious, setting. The fact is, good people do good things and evil people do evil things.

## Morality

It is a well known fact that religious belief does not guarantee morality.

Religion has placed a limit on how moral humans can become. Before humanity can change for the better, religion must end its rein of intolerance, fanaticism, and terror. In the end, humans must create a moral world free from unnecessary religious interference. Society must become its own moral authority and recognize that morality, like all other human belief systems, resides in the mortal brain-mind, not in the "immortal soul." Love, mercy, justice, truth, morality, etc., are not supernatural creations. They are human virtues.

## FREE-WILL

Free-will gives humans some volitional control over alternative lines of conduct. With free-will comes self-appraisal of one's conduct. Free-will is necessary for moral responsibility.

## NATURE

Nature is intrinsically amoral.

## RELIGION

Most people feel that religion is a positive force for morality. But, morality (or more properly, ethics) is not the sole domain of religion. Ethical behavior and its social impact can obviously be accomplished in a rational, non-religious, way. In terms of observable behavior, the moral conduct of believers and nonbelievers is indistinguishable.

It is hard to debunk the idea that morality can only realized through religious belief.

## Morality

It is a psychological absurdity to believe anything you cannot morally justify. Not only is it pointless but a matter of intellectual honesty.

There are many ways for children to learn right from wrong.

One does not become righteous by simply believing in God and heaven and hell.

The church is often less concerned with its own ethical standards than with the conduct of others. Religion has vehemently condemned "deviant" sexuality, while often turning a blind eye to such practice within its own ranks.

Our morals and sense of good and evil are not universal absolutes handed down by a divine being. They have been shaped over the years by the same evolutionary processes that led to our physical being. Exhibiting "proper" behavior would obviously have survival value.

Religion is often looked upon as the foundation for all morality, even though the moral history of religion scarcely inspires confidence. Relegating morality to institutionalized religion is the root cause of the moral confusion we see today.

Religion spreads guilt instead of joy.

Each religion promotes its own unique beliefs on morality, so as the religions of the world diverged, personal morals diverged. The resulting fragmentation of moral standards is problematic since most of the world must now socially interact based on a moral substrate.

Although morality is not automatically tied to religion, these concepts have been so intertwined

## Morality

for so long that we may have developed an evolutionary-based epigenetic rule underlying their connection.

Belief in God is not a prerequisite to individual morality; doing good and being good. One can be just as moral without religion as with it. The trick is to discover ways of grounding morals in nonreligious ways. That is, to construct a secular system by which humans can live moral lives in the absence of theism, which historically has considered morality to be its exclusive purview.

It is often argued that without God as the highest moral authority there would be no reason to be moral.

Our notion of right and wrong has become vastly different from that in which we evolved.

Humans did not evolve in accord with laws of moral conduct, only pressure to reproduce.

Moral laws are the creation of human priests. To give them authority they declared them handed down by God.

It is not necessary to look to God, or some other supernatural order, for moral leadership. In the end, morality rests on informal contracts within society. Morality is as much a function of family dynamics and personal characteristics as it is religious belief.

Morality is culturally variant, but we need not share moral values in order to understand and respect them.

Only humans have developed genuine ethical systems.

## Morality

We constantly praise and blame each other and punish and reward each other because we assume responsibility for our actions.

There is little question that private morality effects a person's public behavior.

Conduct during adulthood often has roots in childhood experience.

No single cause can account for moral or immoral behavior. In the end, morality is a matter of conscious choice.

People often depart from accepted patterns of social behavior, often with harm to themselves and others. Society often backs up moral beliefs with law and force.

Morality is a type of belief.

There are no moral absolutes, at least not attainable ones. Everything is relative and a matter of degree.

Adolescent children usually know enough about the social and physical consequences of their conduct to satisfy the cognitive conditions of moral responsibility.

Self-deception, weakness of will and phobias are forms of moral impotence.

We try to ground our morals in any number of ways including: religion, logic, philosophy, society, and government.



## Morality

Moral claims are, in principle, incapable of being tested. There can be no evidence for or against a moral hypothesis.

Darwin expressly stated his bewilderment about the issue of evil.

Morality is largely centered in symbolic acts and like other symbolic systems has many orders.

Morality is often based on the belief of others, such as those of organized religion, which in turn is based on belief in "the written word," which in turn is based on the belief of century old writers, and so on. Morality in this instance becomes extremely shallow and largely symbolic. It is easy to see why many people bypass some of these steps, such as organized religion and biblical writing in their quest for morality. This chain of belief has also been modified over the years to fit contemporary thinking, i.e., equal rights, freedom of speech, science, etc.

The historical moral beliefs, largely founded in organized religion, that created and/or tolerated holy wars, inquisitions, crusades, genocide, ethnic cleansing and other heinous acts, are hardly the moral beliefs most Western people feel comfortable with today.

Morality usually includes two processes; kin selection and reciprocal altruism.

## KIN SELECTION

## ALTRUISM

Reciprocal altruism may have been the prime mover for cooperation and goodwill among early groups of humans. It also may have helped create the hierarchical social structure so

## Morality

important to primates.

Humans sacrifice for non-kin strangers to an extraordinary degree. Vengeance is often targeted at those who do not return favors.

Altruism is recommended in most moral codes.

Altruism might have developed as a useful survival strategy. Genes for altruism can evolve if altruism is targeted at kin.

Large brains may have allowed proto-humans to recall which individuals had shared fairly and which had not.

## Moral Identity

The path to moral identity is an incremental process occurring gradually over many years. As children grow, they are increasingly exposed to both moral and immoral influences. These social pressures foster habits effecting the development of moral identity or those moral principles that help define the self and moral commitment throughout life. Simply put, social conditions promote young people's moral growth. Social conditions can have such an influence as to leave a child both sociopathic and cognitively impaired.

Humans are born with an emotional predisposition to act in certain moral ways. A moral code of conduct is built on top of tendencies that already exist. This moral code works best, however, under conditions of personal responsibility that are increasingly rare in complex, modern society.

Morality

**Sociality**

Some individuals seem to lack conscience, empathy and sense of justice as a result of improperly developed sociality during infancy, early childhood or adolescence. Children are continuously being bombarded and led astray by incomplete information, subjective biases, religious dogma and media sensationalism. The acquisition of social rules can be very difficult, if not impossible, without regular social input from birth, such as comforting, physical contact and sensory stimulation.

Socialization is a matter of further developing a child's innate emotional response system.

We are often held morally responsible only for our rational actions.

**Animals**

Other animals, including the primates, lack our moral sense and ability to make ethical decisions. They are not moral agents; they do not know right from wrong and feel neither guilt nor shame.

**Conscience**

**SUMMARY**