

# Religion, morality, and the good life

[Science](#), [Biology](#)



Religion, Morality, and the Good Life Does morality depend on religion? Many believe the fundamental aspects of morality and religion join to form the basis on how one chooses to live their life. Some would define morality as a system we humans use to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Morality could derive from a number of different factors including, religion, culture, and upbringing. Those that believe that morality derives from religion or God's commands trust in the Divine Command Theory.

The Divine Command Theory is the idea that morality is dependent on God; that one's moral obligation be determined by their obedience to God's commands. This theory has been and probably will continue to be controversial to many. Morality must have a purely secular foundation. Although religion might not be the concrete basis for morality, it is certain that religion is needed sometime when dealing with specific aspects of morality. There are 2 types of morality, justified and unjustified. Justified morality is common sense and does not require intense interpretation.

For example, "Do not steal" is a justified moral command because when one steals they are bringing evil to someone and that is immoral. Unjustified morals are much harder to find reason for than justified morals which can be easily justified by common knowledge. "Do not have sex before marriage," is an example of an unjustified morality. It is difficult to explain why doing the act is immoral. This moral standard is irrational in that there is no reasonable answer why one should not do this act in order to remain moral.

Religion comes in handy when dealing with grey areas of morality. Those grey areas are known as the unjustified moral commands or unjustified morality. Given the example for an unjustified moral command, one could

answer the question “ Why should I not do this in order to remain moral,” by saying it is immoral to have sex before marriage because God commanded us not to because he will punish one who does not follow his commandments. There is no central harm because if this action but one’s self-interest or fear of God’s wrath will keep one from committing this immoral act.

The use of God and religion to justify these issues is only useful when dealing with a God-fearing and moral person. Although using religion with morality, in this case, may cause one to agree that morality needs religion and that the Divine Command Theory explains why, it does not justify that religion is the basis for morality. Are right and wrong actions commanded by God? The Divine Command Theory states that good and bad are created by God, not by humans. It has been illustrated that the Divine Command Theory cannot be logically true.

The Divine Command Theory states that if God commands “ A,” his commands by itself are sufficient to make “ A” good. “ A is good” just means “ A is commanded by God. ” God’s commands are good simply because God commands it. If there were no God, or if God did not issue any commands, then there would be no such thing as moral right or wrong. However, if actions are good on their own without influence from God, then the Divine Command Theory is false because it is naturally commanded that we do things which are good and avoid those in which we know to be wrong.

One’s belief in the existence of a god or gods may cause one to believe that morality assumes God’s existence. Their beliefs seem to give their lives purpose and clear understanding. In Genesis 1: 27 it says, “ So God created  
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mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ” (NIV) According to Christianity, God created us in his likeness as to fulfill the plan or purpose that he had intended for us. With this idea, the Catholic Church developed the concept of natural law.

This natural law concept stated that by working out what one’s purpose is, we will be able to see how we should act and/or behave; it would be apparent in the way in which we have been designed. Within the Catholic Church, the Pope’s condemnation of homosexuality is an example of the natural law theory at work. The natural result to sex is conception, and any other sexual act that is not available to this possibility would be an immoral rejection to the plan God had intended for them. It is obvious that this natural law approach to ethics can cause controversy.

It might be perceived as a poor imitation of morality in that it fails to provide justification for many basic moral principles. The supposed link between God and morality provides the idea because God is omnipotent and our creator; we have an obligation to obey his commands. With him being our creator, we owe him our existence. Many ask the obvious question, “ Why do we have this obligation? ” Although this view has not stood up to reflection, people once believed that children owed the act of obedience to their parents only because children depended on their parents. This view is remarkably similar to the reasoning given for feudalism.

In feudalism, in exchange for the protection of the lord, the vassal would give some sort of service to the lord. The obligation between the lord and the vassal regarding the fief or land forms the basis of the feudal relationship. The weakness in this political system was that the vassals never agreed to

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this plan. By answering the above question in saying that our obligation to obey God's command is because obedience is morally right, the assumption has been made that morality exists independently of God. Why things are right in the first place is justified and explained by the Divine Command Theory.

The Divine Command Theory shows an apparent resemblance to the natural law approach as discussed just before. Rather than focusing on features of his assumed creation as with the natural law theory, the Divine Command Theory implicates a focus on God's orders. An obvious example of God's orders would be the Ten Commandments. The most common objection to this approach is that it makes morality seem somewhat subjective. It implies the theoretical likelihood of rape being right simply because God commands this. Some may say that God would never command such an act as rape. God has not, in fact, commanded that rape is good.

Assuming that the Divine Command Theory is, in fact, true, it would see God's goodness in that he will not do anything wrong. But it does not follow that he won't be unjust or cruel. As long as he is not violating any of his commands, no matter what God does, he will not be doing anything wrong. God is omniscient and morally perfect. Surely this gives us exact reason to why we ought to obey his commands. God's moral perfection, after all, guarantees that he will issue only those commands that he thinks are right. His overall insight and expertise assures that he will never be wrong in what he believes is right to command of us.

It sees God as the highest possible moral guide, giving us reason to always obey his commands. Although this is correct, it does not support the Divine

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Command Theory. To argue this point is to assume that the greater moral quality is dependent of God's will, in which the basis for what he commands is. Some thinkers like Immanuel Kant and John Newman, just to name a few, have argued that a sense of conscience is evidence of God. With morality and religion being independent of one another, the independence is considered to be compatible with the existence of God.

If we accept that the existence of conscience assumes a being to whom we owe responsibility, God would seem like the only candidate. He is the only person with omnipotent power to see and judge our every action. Newman furthered this thought by asking why people would feel guilty if they did not think they were being watched. In conclusion, there is something wrong with every way of linking morality to religion. I am not claiming that religion cannot have things to say about morality or that it is incapable of helping people do what is morally right.

Instead, my claim is that ethics is enhanced with a religiously neutral foundation. Religion can be defined a set of practices independent of a belief system. Religion is the way in which you worship. Some people have participated in religious worship for a while without giving a great deal of thought to a belief system. Morality can be based on religion, but it also can be independent of one's religion or faith. Although it is possible to hold a religion and not hold to any strong moral principles and vice versa for holding just moral principles, many people hold religious and moral principles.

As with Christianity, religion is doing what you are told to do regardless of what is right, and morality is doing what is right regardless of what you are

told to do. Although morality and religion are used at times to justify one another, they are not dependent of one another. . Works Cited " Genesis 1 NIV - The Beginning - In the beginning God - Bible ... " Bible Gateway. Web. 15 Apr. 2013 . " The Internet Classics Archive | Euthyphro by Plato. " The Euthyphro. N. p. , n. d. Web. 15 Apr. 2013