

# How, according to stace, does science challenge religion and morality

[Religion](#)



The developments of science, according to Stace, have made belief in God or religion obsolete. And since religion has historically been the basis of morality, it too is being lost to mankind. Beginning with Galileo and Newton, and continuing through with Darwin, mankind's former ideas and beliefs about the universe seemed to begin unraveling. These men showed that even the heavens could be described in terms simply of mathematics. This means that any man could understand the movements of heaven.

These facts confronted a world that once believed the stars in the sky moved in a great dance out of love or the Creator. This dance was now shown to be no mysterious harmony of unknown figures, but to be a mathematical absolute definable purely by equations and numbers. If the mysteries of heaven could be thus revealed, then potentially all things could be. Science could now explain all the things that were once reserved for the realm of religion. Now even nature, humanity, and the purposes behind them could be defined by science, which is to say purely in terms of matter and chemical reactions.

This poses a fundamental challenge to religion, whose basic goal is to reveal the deeper meaning of life. Science has shown that the universe has no hidden secrets that we are unable to comprehend. It is not an all powerful God who moves these things according to His will. There is no God, and therefore no underlying deeper meaning or purpose to life. Everything is merely matter described by mathematics. As far as humanity is concerned, life is meaningless. Furthermore, the evidences and discoveries of science pose a direct challenge to morality. They do this in several ways.

If religion does not contain the truth, and there is no God, then there is no basis for humanity's moral principles. Fundamentally, morality had been based on the belief that there was an all-powerful God who required a certain standard of living and would punish or reward us in the after-life for our actions while we lived. But after science has put an end to these religious beliefs, all mankind has left with is that morality ultimately originates within himself. Morality is reduced to a matter of personal preference. Consequently, widespread beliefs in moral relativity develop.

Moreover, if humanity can be fully described by the laws of science, then everything that he does can theoretically be predicted. And if that is the case, then man must have no free will, and is therefore not responsible for his actions. While Stace does not believe this argument, he nevertheless acknowledges that a great many people have come to this conclusion because of the discoveries of science. The solution to these problems must be brutal honesty. According to Stace, we would all be better off if we learned to accept and embrace the truth that the world is devoid of an ultimate purpose.

We must give up our illusions that the world is somehow good and moral and working itself out in a great and wise plan in which goodness will somehow triumph. It is only by this that a civilized people can emerge. Obeying the laws of morality simply out of fear of a great being who executes judgment is not to be truly civilized. This is why civilization is in danger when the religious basis for morality is gone. The mass of humanity is not truly

civilized, but is only "sham civilized." They obey the laws of morality simply out of fear or greed of eternal consequences.

To be truly civilized is to be able to obey these laws without the prodding or support of dreams and illusions. And those educated people who are able to achieve this will be able to live well and contented lives with those around them. 2. Summarize Benedict's conception of morality and show how Lewis would criticize it. In Benedict's observations of the world, she has seen that every culture and society has its own particular set of values, morals, and definition of "normal" behavior for its members. As a whole, humanity clearly acknowledges no universal code of morality.

Morality, therefore, is a cultural construct simply dictating what is "normal" for that society. It develops naturally into different systems based on the physical and historical development of any given people, and is a product of their own personal preferences. The very small number of deviants from that which is "normal" in a given culture is simply proof that most of individual human beings are perfectly able and willing to form themselves into any shape given to them. Lewis, however, has found that rather the opposite is true.

He argues that the existence of morality at all is an evidence of a God who defines it absolutely. The fact that people express differing ideas of morality shows that there is an underlying truth that they do agree on. Disagreeing about whether or not a person should be put to death, for example, shows a basic agreement on the value of human life. And though many cultures have differing views as to when and how certain individuals ought to be put to

death, this simply shows that they all share one of the most basic principles of morality: realization of the inherent value of human life.

Moreover, upon closely examining many different cultures, Lewis argues that the ways in which they are similar are far more striking than are the ways in which they differ. And the fact that every civilization and culture have had surprisingly similar codes of morality is an evidence that morality is not something invented by individual cultures, but is ultimately based in something objective and beyond ourselves. This "something" is not purely conventional. Lewis argues that it can not be simply a construct of society.

Just because society teaches something does not mean that society has invented that thing. Mathematics, for example, is taught by society, and yet it was not invented by society. The universality of morality shows that it is not the construct of a given society, but that it is undamentally normative to humanity, and therefore every society must embrace it in some way.

Furthermore, morality is not simply the natural development of our personal preferences or instincts, for we often engage in actions that we do not like or enjoy, and often do this against our instincts, all in the name of Morality.

When asked to respond why he jumped in front of a speeding truck to save an elderly lady, a man would generally respond, "because it was the right thing to do." It is neither instinct nor preference which induces men to act morally in the most trying circumstances, rather it is conviction of what he ought to do. It is this basic belief in a morality with absolute and universal rights and wrongs, which exists in all mankind, that invokes him to obey the

code of morality. Lewis also combats an argument implied by Benedict, namely that science is able to fully describe humanity.

However, Lewis concludes that normative morality can not be discovered by purely scientific means. Science can not discover the laws which say that men ought to behave in a certain way. These laws do not come from creation, but from beyond it. And that is a realm in which science can not tread. . Can morality be comprehended in purely egoistic terms? Explain why or why not. The egoist claims that either we all act solely for purely self-interested and selfish reasons, or at least that we have no reason to act otherwise.

To be sure, we all do act in our own self-interest, but that is not to say that we do so at all times in all circumstances. Nor does it necessarily mean that we may not act for more than one reason simultaneously. Similarly, the fact that one receives pleasure from acting kindly towards others does not necessarily negate the fact that he may also truly care for another person's well being. The egoist position, though it can be well argued for, cannot fully comprehend morality. Egoism argues that one only acts kindly towards others in so far as it affords pleasure to do so.

However, the very fact that it affords pleasure to be kind to others is evidence that one truly cares for the feelings and well being of others. True, one may receive pleasure from it, but the fact still remains that one still cares for other people. That fact strikes at the very heart of egoism. Further, one may in actuality receive less pleasure from helping others than one would otherwise. The egoist will of course respond to this by saying that the

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very fact that one chose to help others is evidence that one truly receives the greatest pleasure from it.

This argument does not hold up in practical application. The man who saves the elderly woman from being hit by a car, only to suffer devastating lifelong injuries himself, has clearly not received the greatest pleasure from his own actions. Yet many would still choose that course of action, even if they had known the consequences of such actions in advance. The ethical egoist, seeing that altruistic actions are possible, and do in fact occur on a fairly regular basis, is then quick to say that though one may act in such a manner, one is under no obligation to do so.

Here he comes to a matter of fundamental presuppositions. He believes that there is no reason in the universe that any person ought to act in any way beyond that of his own self-interest. And if the universe creates a meaningless life for humanity, then he is right. There is then no ultimate reason why one ought to care for the well being of others. Those who would refute the egoist here must have a fundamental belief that there is a meaning to life, and that it matters how we live our life. If one says he acts to help others, the egoist will question the basis on which one has made this conclusion.

The egoist has established his basis: the universe is meaningless and indifferent to good or evil, and is therefore incapable of providing any moral principles. Therefore, the only logical approach is to defend himself. He wants to continue living, and he wants to be happy, therefore he will do whatever is in his own best interest, and there is no reason that he ought to

act otherwise. In order to refute this, one must believe that there is an ultimate absolute reason to seek the benefit of others. Simply to say that one acts because his actions help others is insufficient.

Why does helping others matter, the egoist will ask. To reply, because it pleases me, is to play directly into the egoists hands. No, the only possible reply to this is to assert that the universe does, in fact, have some deeper meaning. Therefore, our actions are ultimately important in some way, for we are required to care for the well being of others by some other absolute standard of morality. At this point the argument shifts from a discussion of morality to one of religious beliefs and scientific interpretations.

But ultimately, only one view will lead to the full comprehending of morality. The egoist's position is fundamentally flawed because he believes that the universe is meaningless. If the universe is ultimately meaningless, then any human actions are ultimately irrelevant as far as any ultimate good or evil may be concerned. Yet the very basis for morality is the belief that it really does matter whether or not a man behaves in a certain way. And only the non-egoist can function on those terms.