A Discussion About Morality

Morality is a word that I feel is used much too often and understood way too little. Perhaps I would not mind so much except that, directly or indirectly, it seems to be the center of most arguments between Christians and non-Christians. In fact, the arguments over pain and suffering, which is the most common argument against Jehovah, is intimately tied to Christian ideas on morality.

And while the arguments over morality rage without mercy on either side, in most cases neither side is playing fair. A Christian will say "look to the immorality of the atheistic socialist states," and the atheist will respond with the immorality of the Spanish Inquisition and the pedophilia scandals of the Church. The Christian is now on the defensive and probably doesn't know why. He can reply with how neither activity was endorsed by the Church, but the atheist will ask why the Church allowed it. Now no answer will work, because the atheist has taken control and can question every response given in answer to the previous question, eventually wearing the Christian out.

Alternatively, the Christian may point out that, while horrible, the horrors done in the name of Christianity over 2,000 years pales in comparison to the 100 million killings done in less than a century by socialism. While this is a fair and honest argument to make, it also fails for at least two reasons. First is the fundamental nature of humans: a single death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic. A single child molested by a priest will generate more anger and outrage than the three million people starved to death by Pol Pot. At this point, the interlocutor is making an emotional argument for the child and no logic will change this. Indeed, to continue to argue with logic tells the interlocutor that one lacks empathy, and is therefore a monster. But the second, and more scary reason, is that many times the interlocutor does not view starving three million people as morally wrong, but rather as a regrettable price to be paid for a greater good. In contrast, most Christians are ashamed of the ugly things done in the name of Christianity, and many Protestants are quick to claim they are not "Catholic" in a hollow attempt to distance themselves from the more well known events. So while the skeptic argues from the position of hope, the Christian finds himself arguing from a position of guilt and division. This may sound incredible, but much of this paper is going to focus on this phenomenon. One can agree with my hypothesis or not. But, if I'm right, then it is futile to demonstrate horrible things as examples of immorality when the interlocutor does not believe these acts are immoral. It is also futile to argue there are "good" Christians and "bad" Christians.

Before I get to the meat of my argument, let me address one final observation. There has been a fad going on for some time. It is the "don't judge me" phenomenon. I cannot say for certain where it started. When I first experienced it, it came from a self-proclaimed Christian who was hiding behind Jesus's warning to "stop judging, that you may not be judged." (Matthew 7:1) More recently, either because it has grown in popularity and/or I have become more aware of its presence, I am seeing comments like "only God can judge me." While I find the first example to be in poor taste, I find the shift in attitude from "you ought not" to "you can't" to be disturbing. Now, I don't know if this change in attitude is the cause of the problem, or is merely a symptom of the problem, but the idea that there is no societal norm for judging moral behavior *is* a problem. Agnostics like Christopher Hitchens openly challenge Christian morals, while Richard Dawkins and Peter Singer create their own moral codes and are praised for doing so. When I visit atheist web sites that invite public comment, accusations that Christians are forcing their morals on the atheists is a fairly common complaint. This does not just draw a line between skeptic and Christian, but divides all of us from everyone else who has even slightly different beliefs.

I believe that the cause of the communication problem between Christians and non-Christians is all too obvious. The fact that many on both sides refuse to be reasonable only makes a bad situation worse. As my interest is on the Christian perspective, my goal here is to equip my fellow Christians to spread the word. As such, I want to consider this specific challenge and how to address it. And I believe that this fix will be to listen to what the non-Christians are saying morality is. As mentioned above, the pattern I have seen is that the Christian is normally on the defense. He is always making a moral claim only to have it mercilessly attacked. We need to reverse this dynamic. Christians need to get non-Christians to make a moral claim, and then have *them* defend it.

But, as Christians, we must also respect the dignity of others, no matter how corrupted their views. I hope that what I write here will give the Christian some new tools to use to ensure a fair discussion, yet still allow the Christian to project authority. It is being faithful to our faith that gives us strength.

A) Definitions:

1) Morality: In the Merriam Webster dictionary entry for "moral," **definition 1.a** says, "of or relating to principals of right and wrong in behavior." I want to point out that this is a secular definition. Morality need not be Christian, and indeed it should not be. I think the biggest stumbling block for both sides of this debate is to accept the idea that morality is for the benefit of man, not for the benefit of God. I want to re-word this definition in order to focus on what is important for discussion between Christians and non-Christians: morality is *a system of beliefs* that determines what is right (or good), and what is wrong (or evil). This system is built upon a basis (which I explain shortly) that serves as its "world view."

2) Ethics: "Ethics" is a word that can mean many things. If we look this word up in this same dictionary, we see this is so. It is the existence of these multiple definitions that causes much of the problems in debate. Frequently, the word is understood differently by each side, and/or at least one side feels free to change meaning based on what serves him best at the moment. Since many of these alternative definitions are essentially covered by "morality," I want to look specifically at **definition 3**: "the discipline *dealing* with what is good and bad and *with moral duty and obligation*." (italics mine) From here, I would like to fine tune it to mean "how one should act with respect to one's morals." If one's acts are consistent with one's morals, then one can be considered "ethical." If not, then one can be called either "unethical" or "hypocritical." I want to point out that this definition means how one acts with respect to their actual morals, not "professed" morals. I made it this way because many moral systems, such as evolutionism (**Topic A.5**) and utilitarianism (**Topic D**) allow for deceit. A real challenge for the Christian is to discern whether one's interlocutor is merely suffering from cognitive dissonance or whether he views deceit as a virtue.

3) Basis: For this paper, a basis is the foundation upon which one's morals are built. It seems to me that there are three bases that one can build a moral code upon: the supernatural, the natural, and man. In regards to the supernatural, I mean specifically god(s) or god-like being(s). For reasons I won't pretend to understand, a surprising number of skeptics will deny the existence of a deity, but are okay with angels, minor demons, ghosts, vampires, fairies and other such creatures.

4) Determinism: A belief (although, by its own definition, an illusionary belief) that nothing is in anyone's control, and that there is no free will. Atoms must behave according to the unyielding laws of physics. Since molecules are made of atoms, they must likewise obey the laws of nature. Furthermore, cells are made of molecules, and organs (such as the brain) are made of cells. So all

operate in a precise and, if all relevant forces are known, predictable way. There is no such thing as choice, as all objects must move in accordance with the laws of physics. This is an extreme position, and absolute in its application. Determinism is based on the natural.

5) Evolutionism: The belief that the universe is an extremely hostile and ever-changing place, in which life forms must find a way to survive or die. As the universe itself changes, no single adaptation can be supreme. What is essential to survive in one set of circumstances can be deadly in another. But while one can believe all of this and still not use this information as a basis for morality, in this paper "evolutionism" will refer to using these beliefs as a moral basis. Evolutionism is based on the natural.

6) Agnosticism: An inability or unwillingness to decide what to believe concerning the existence of supernatural powers. Agnostic morality is based on either nature or man.

7) Atheism: A belief that there are no supernatural powers. Its morality is therefore based on either the natural or man.

8) Paganism: A belief that there are multiple gods. Paganism is based on the supernatural.

9) Christianity: A belief that Jesus Christ was God made flesh, whose life is described in the gospels, and whose teachings can be found in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. When I speak of Christianity, I am referring to the doctrinal beliefs and attitudes shared by nearly every brand of Christianity (while my research can't find a hard number to quote, I have reason to suspect it's something like 99% or more). It is described by C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*, and in other works of his. Christianity is based on Jehovah and on man's interpretation of Jehovah's revelations. Its morality is based both on the supernatural and on man together. This is possible because of the belief that man is made in God's image, and therefore man has a certain amount of latitude within the moral framework God created to decide what is good and bad (more in **Topic F**).

10) Patriarchism: This is a word I coined myself for discussions of morality. It is a practice of deciding for oneself what is and isn't included in one's moral code, and then attempting to convince others to use (or at least tolerate) it as well. I chose this term because if one is successful in gathering a following, one becomes the patriarch of the morality one created. Obviously, this is a man-based morality, although it is often inspired by all three bases.

B) Ground Rules: I have heard it said that, "The problem isn't that people don't know what to think, the problem is they don't know what thinking is. It is confused with emotion." Never assume the interlocutor will be rational or play fair. This topic is to help the gentle reader in ensuring a fair discussion with others.

Discussions shall follow the Socratic Method, where one side presents an argument (I will present a few as examples in **Topic H**), then the other side can use a counter-argument that can expose incorrect information, identify faulty logic, question vague and/or unclear concepts, provide additional relevant information, approach the issue from a new angle, or similar actions. Then the first person gets to critique the counter-argument, and then back and forth until either an agreement is made, one side concedes, or the debate otherwise ends. Voluntarism (I believe something is true because I want it to be true) and skepticism (I deny believing that anything can be true) without supporting information and logic is *ispo facto* an admission of defeat. Arguments need also stay on topic. While examples are helpful, one is usually plenty to demonstrate a point. If my interlocutor needs more than three examples to prove a point, then I feel he has failed to present his argument successfully, and I will call

them out for going off on tangents.

C) What is Lost and What is Gained?: The Christian will have to give up imposing his idea of morality on non-Christians. This should at least please the many non-Christians I have met who have told me to do just this. What the Christian does gain, however, is an ability to show what the world looks like without Christian morals. It is my expectation that, when non-Christians have to confess their moral codes and examine what their associated ethics must lead to, Christianity will look a lot more appealing than previously expected.

What the non-Christian will gain here is a voice with which to speak to Christians in defense of their own moral views. What the non-Christian will lose is the ability to assume that Christian morals can now fill the gaps of their own argument. The non-Christian must now present a complete moral code and explore what ethics must come from it.

D) Judging Behavior: If we accept my definition of morality as the ability to determine right from wrong, then we must admit that morality is really a means of assigning value to any particular action and motivation. When we recognize that there are different means of assigning such value, we can understand why so much ineffectual argument takes place over this matter. While a certain amount of variation can exist between sub-groups, they must still recognize some common system of morality (usually expressed by some type of law or doctrine) to co-exist. Sub-groups with morals that are so radical as to deny the possibility of common ground with others simply cannot exist within the larger group. Peaceful coexistence is not possible; one sub-group or the other must be converted or removed.

When we accept that different moral values exist, we cannot call a Native American or a Viking "unethical" for torturing a prisoner of war to death. In their moral system, the prisoner lost his honor, and therefore his chance for their idea of paradise, by being captured. But by being brave through torture, the prisoner is given a chance to regain his honor and therefore win back a place in paradise. Therefore, such torture is an act of charity by their moral codes. Christians can call it horrible and ugly, but not unethical. But just because this activity is ethical by one set of moral codes does not mean it can (or should) coexist within a Christian culture. The two are incompatible; one or the other must go. Perhaps Christianity is "bad" for destroying these practices by breaking up the religions that promoted this morality, but I, for one, am grateful I do not live in such cultures.

For a more contemporary example of morality being incompatible with Christianity, I would like to turn to Australian philosopher Peter Singer. In a book of his (*Practical Ethics*), he originally defended the Nazi's killing of Jews as a prudent measure based on the world view the Nazi's had. However, he removed this section from subsequent publications of the book because the controversy was impacting his ability to present his other ideas. Based on an evolutionist moral system, the Nazi's were ethical. The elimination of any species is allowable if it promotes one's own species. And the Nazi's were not the only socialists who were evolutionists. Every socialist experiment, including the Wokism today, views the world through an evolutionary lens. This is because Karl Marx married Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic with Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution. But I digress. My main point here is that Singer defended evolutionist morality and, when he thought such a stand was hurting his ability to reach more people with his other messages, he dropped it. This is a very evolutionist thing to do. But Peter Singer calls himself a utilitarian (the greatest good for the most people, a moral system based on man), and deceit is likewise ethical within it. Utilitarianism focuses on the ends, and *any* means that achieve these ends are ethical.

In his famous paper called "Singer Solution to World Poverty," Singer explicitly warns of the

danger of being like the Germans who allowed the Nazis to take power through their indifference. But he is not only being inconsistent between his different works, he was inconsistent within this one short paper (6 pages). The most disturbing inconsistency in the paper, at least in my opinion, is the moral outrage he expresses over "Dora," who lives in a third world country. She escorts a homeless boy to a house and is paid $1,000 for her efforts. She later finds out that the boy will be killed for his organs. Now, potentially six lives could be saved by the use of the boy's organs (two kidneys, two lungs, a liver and a heart). Even by ignoring organs that would only improve the quality of life of others (such as eyes for the blind), the utilitarian logic of sacrificing one life for six is giving the greatest good (life) to the most people, and is therefore an ethical act within utilitarian morality. Furthermore, Singer admonishes Americans (I don't know why he didn't consider his Australian countrymen here) for not giving more to charity, claiming that for every $200 Americans give, one life could be saved in the third world. So, by Singer's own arguments, Dora is actually undercharging by $200, as the six lives she saved should come to a $1,200 reward. Singer is in conflict with the ethics of the moral system he professes to follow. The outrage demonstrated would make sense if Singer instead claimed to be a Kantian (whatever moral maxims one holds, such as the sanctity of life, should be true for everyone and at all times), a Contractarian (*all* those involved in the matter must agree to what must be done, including the child), or to follow Christian morals (killing for organs is an obvious violation of justice (**Topic F.1.i**) on behalf of the boy). But he does not claim to follow any of these moral codes, and seems blind to his own hypocrisy.

E) Non-Christian Moral Codes Judging Christian Morals: While it has been my experience that non-Christians do not want to be judged by Christians, there does not seem to be any issue with attacking Christian morals. Are they acting ethically?

The determinist would call any moral code illusionary, as all actions are determined ahead of time and are outside one's control. To suggest an act can be right or wrong assumes one has a choice in how one acts, therefore morality is meaningless in a deterministic sense. Determinists can only call Christians "delusional," as they would anyone else who claims one can make a choice. For determinists, there is no morality, therefore there can be no ethics.

Evolutionists would look at the Old Testament and all its "horrors" as arguably the finest piece of literature ever written to promote their brand of morality in practice. The whole of the Old Testament is a struggle for survival, and the Hebrews did whatever it took to ensure they survived. The New Testament, however, would likely leave them perplexed. Nothing promoted in the New Testament has a logical expectation to work, yet the success of Christianity against all odds to become the world's largest religion should be seen as the supreme fulfillment of the evolutionists' ideal. For ten fishermen and a disgraced tax collector to go against the full might of their countrymen and the Roman Empire, both of whom were set to destroy them by any means possible, is the ultimate survival story. Evolutionists can be in awe of Christianity or puzzled by it, but they cannot deny the effectiveness of Christian morals.

Pagans are quite complicated on this matter, mainly because contemporary pagans mostly live in Christian cultures and tend to assume that their pagan beliefs have a highly developed moral code coming from their gods. For the most part, pagan mythology deals primarily with why things are the way they are, and mostly comes across as telling one to accept life as it is, as opposed to how it should be. It is true that there is a common denominator between Christian morals and pagan faiths, but it would be worded along the lines of "thou shalt not disrespect your god(s)." The famous myth of Sisyphus really drives home this idea, but this concept is found universally throughout paganism. The one virtue found pagan-wide is obedience, and sadly this belief is often inappropriately assigned to

Jehovah as well (Jehovah does demand obedience, but not in the same manner as pagan gods). Still, many pagan gods did personify a virtue that their human champions were to exhibit. In the context of this more generalized expression of pagan morality, any particular god within a pantheon might be for or against Christian morals, but the pantheon as a whole cannot condemn Christians virtues. But even in this limited context, pagan gods didn't just represent a virtue, they also represented the virtue taken to extreme (and often disastrous) ends. This is something that Jesus decidedly does *not* do. So while pagans have to accept Jehovah as one god of many, they can wonder how Christian morality could be so successful as it is so limited.

And now we are left with patriarchism. Being non-religious, patriarchists do not base their morals on the supernatural. By not being determinists or evolutionists, they do not base their morals on nature. All that is left is basing their morals on man. When it comes to basing morals on man, one is left with two choices: some version of Virtue Theory, or *a la carte*. Virtue Theory has taken many different forms. While details vary greatly from one to the other, they are still remarkably similar in application and results. This phenomenon is often called "universal morality." They are based on man, specifically man's ability to reason. I will discuss reason-based ethics in the next topic. But, unlike religious-based morals, patriarchal reason is not guided by the Theological Virtues, which will also be discussed in the next topic. Virtue Theory patriarchists may debate finer points of Christian Natural Law (which itself was modeled by Saint Thomas Aquinas, doctor of the Church, after Aristotle's version of Virtue Theory), but essentially they are the same. They both use similar procedures and almost always arrive at similar conclusions (as will be seen in **Topic H**).

The *a la carte* method is to simply pick and choose virtues as one sees fit. While I will not deny the possibility of exceptions, the normal procedure seems to be to collect a variety of whatever ethics capture one's interest, and then put them together to suit one's taste. The "why can't I just be a decent person and leave everyone else alone?" view of ethics is a popular example of this moral system. There seems to be little consideration on how the disparate ethics fit together, or how they stand up to close scrutiny. I hope I have demonstrated this point well enough in my earlier critique of Singer (utilitarianism is very much an *a la carte* patriarch morality, as one, like Singer, gets to decide what the "greatest good for the most people" looks like) in **Topic D**. The virtue of "truthfulness," so easily assumed to exist in a Christian culture, seems to be lacking in most *a la carte* patriarchs, as they hide so much from the public. One has to pay attention over time as to what they say, as inconsistency invariably shows up. Since morality is what they want it to be, they can question the ethical behavior of any Christian action. But, in the name of fairness, the Christian can question their ethics as well.

F) Christian Moral System: What I am about to explain is what the Catholic Church teaches about morality, as revealed by the Bible, tradition, and philosophical insights made by many saints. As Catholics represent a little over half the Christian population, I can say with confidence that this is the standard by which Christian ethics should be determined. Other Christians may not formally agree with the system, but most follow it in practice. It is actually quite intuitive once the concept is understood. It is based on seven virtues divided into three Theological Virtues and four Cardinal Virtues. The Cardinal Virtues can be discovered by man through his reason. The Theological Virtues cannot be reasoned out; they must be learned.

      1) Cardinal Virtues:

          i) Justice: A recognition that all living things have a certain dignity that needs to be respected. A common, but unethical, application of this virtue is to give lesser or greater dignity to certain individuals or groups.

ii) Temperance: An ability to find the ideal economy of action, that what is done is neither too much nor too little. Oftentimes, laziness causes too little action while passion causes too much.

iii) Fortitude: The strength to act on what one believes is right. Too often, one knows what to do but, for some reason, holds back. A more insidious lack of fortitude can come from feeling guilty over or embarrassed by receiving some benefit from a moral choice. It is a grave mistake to assume that an ethical decision must mean one cannot benefit from it. Christian ethics can result in either a "both/and" event or as an "either/or" event depending on the circumstances.

iv) Prudence: The ability to identify options and to foresee consequences of different actions. Saint John Paul II, pope, declared this as the greatest of the Cardinal Virtues. Oftentimes, an inability to properly foresee consequences corrupts prudence. While no one can see the future perfectly, acedia (intellectual laziness) oftentimes inhibits one from knowing what one ought to, and pride can lead to false conclusions regardless of knowledge.

2) Theological Virtues: Unlike the Cardinal Virtues, which can be discovered through reason, Theological Virtues must be learned. Indeed, even when learned, it is difficult to understand what good they are because they really work behind the scenes. I will address how they are deceptively useful in **Topic G**, but I believe the Case Studies (**Topic H**) will really bring out just how they do impact Christian morality.

i) Faith: In religious context, a belief that a deity, or deity-like being, will keep its promise in exchange for obedience. This may be approximated in a man-based system, but one is therefore risking all the imperfections of the man who receives such faith.

ii) Hope: What one believes the reward for obedience will be. This may be approximated in a man-based system as well, again subject to the limitations of man's imperfections.

iii) Charity: Treating and caring for something that does not have any value to oneself as if it did have value. This is not to be confused with philanthropy, although they are not necessarily incompatible. Oftentimes, political gain or recognition is the value received for philanthropy, keeping it from being charity as is meant here. Charity is one of the defining aspects of Christianity that other religions do not have.

G) Why Are Theological Virtues Useful: If one believes, as Christians do, that humans are selfish or otherwise flawed, then the Theological Virtues not only give one motivation to adopt a Christian moral code, but to act on it in an ethical way. What hope looks like depends on what basis is used, although rewards and punishments are common themes. Pagan and man-based Theological Virtues both admit a flawed patron, although paganism allows for much less "gaming the system." Pagan gods, being to some degree omniscient, are still stronger motivators for ethical behavior than man-based moral systems. But the Christian God is fully omniscient, even to knowing the thoughts of the person. It is impossible to "game the system" with Jehovah; one either follows His will or not.

H) Case Studies: I will present five situations to help illustrate how different moral systems will work. The first two are common examples that I think everyone has come across at least once in his life. The third seems to be a favorite among those who discuss ethics, even though almost no one has ever had to deal with it. The last two are, I admit, rather improbable, yet are a favorite among

philosophers.

I will only address the evolutionist, the Christian, and the Virtue Theory form of patriarchism. Determinism, by denying free will, has no morals to be considered. A determinist will respond as he has been programmed to respond. Pagans are too diverse to speak of in a meaningful way, although whatever glorifies their patron first and the pantheon as a whole secondly would lead to the questions one should ask on these matters. Likewise, for an *a la carte* patriarchist, whatever one chooses for one's moral system should dictate their ethics. I also want to emphasize that what follows is not a prediction of what one *will* do, but rather what is the ethical thing to do. Although there are many Virtue Theories available, I will express them in terms of the Cardinal Virtues for simplicity. They usually arrive at the same conclusions and through only slightly different means.

1) **Money (or something else of value) Found on the Ground:**

i) **Evolutionist:** Would assume anyone who lost it has proved themselves unworthy of having it.

ii) **Patriarchist:** Would recognize the dignity of the loser (justice), recognizes some effort should be made to find the one who lost it (fortitude), contemplates how likely and how much effort it would take to find this person (prudence), and how much effort they ought to spend in finding this person (temperance).

iii) **Christian:** Much like the patriarchist, but the belief in being rewarded in Heaven (faith and hope) and a command to help the less fortunate (charity) would encourage a greater effort in finding the person if it was in anyway possible (note the influence the Theological Virtues have on temperance).

2) **Important Game Coming Up:** One finds out that a teammate is going to cheat.

i) **Evolutionist:** Anything that improves the team's chances to win is good, so the only concern it so ensure the cheating is not discovered.

ii) **Patriarchist:** The challenge here is primarily with justice, as each team's dignity is to win. Winning can be seen as a zero-sum situation with respect to justice, allowing a great temptation for cheating. Especially if the other team is known to cheat as well. Prudence would be a factor, as cheating could be discovered, and how this discovery would affect the overall chances of the team's ability to win needs to be addressed. Temperance would be the deciding factor, as the chance of getting away with cheating needs to be equal to or greater than getting caught.

iii) **Christian:** We see the Theological Virtues making a big appearance here, as charity unites us with others. It is not enough to look at the other team as an equal, but also as people we must take care of. As a result, *how* the game is won becomes important. Faith and hope bring a broader perspective to the situation, as winning the game is seen as a small part of a much bigger whole, not as an isolated incident. This, of course, puts pressure on the Christian to either stop or report cheating, so the virtue of fortitude will have a major presence in this situation.

3) **Saving the Jews:** One lives in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II. One knows the location of some hidden Jews, and the Gestapo comes up asking of their whereabouts.

i) Evolutionist: The response here depends on if one is a Jew or not. If one is a Jew, then survival of one's race demands a lie. If one is not a Jew, then survival of oneself demands cooperating with the Gestapo.

ii) Patriarchist: Some decisions need to be made here, especially on how dignity is defined by the patriarch. If one places more dignity on oneself (like an evolutionist), then justice would place one's own safety first and therefore the prudent thing to do is to turn in the Jews. But if this person thought all humans have equal dignity (like Christians), then prudence and temperance would say that lying to the Gestapo was an insignificant slight to their dignity, while saving the Jews at great personal risk is a massive display of respect for theirs. While prudence would likely say the lives of many Jews outweigh one's own risk of death, to face a chance of death at all is no small matter for fortitude to overcome. Faith, hope and charity in *something* seems to be a must if fortitude is to be exercised in saving the Jews.

iii) Christian: Except that Christians believe all humans, no matter how wretched, are of equal dignity, the logic is much the same as with the Patriarchs, and the ethical choice is to try to save the Jews. But for the Christian, faith that any sacrifice on one's part is an act of charity, and having faith in God and hope for an eternal reward for the sacrifice may greatly help one's fortitude.

4) The Trolly Dilemma: One is standing by some railroad tracks with access to a switch that will direct a train down one of two sets of tracks. A train is coming. On one set of tracks is a group of five people who won't be able to get out of the way, while only one such person is on the other set of tracks. Which set of tracks does one send the train down? As this case study is so straight-forward as presented, I do feel it is appropriate to consider some factors outside the commonly stated conditions.

i) Evolutionist: Whichever set of tracks would do the least harm to the species. With no other information available, the train would be sent to kill one, as five people have a better chance of promoting survival of the species. But other factors, if known, could change this. Whether or not one had connections with any of the potential victims would be a massive factor, as their survival is more important than survival of strangers. If there was a famine, then killing five also makes sense. If all five on the one track were sickly specimens while the loner was a healthy specimen, then again it makes sense to save the one. For my last consideration, if the loner has a skill or knowledge essential to the local community, and the others did not, then we again come to saving the one.

ii) Patriarchist: If nothing else can be considered, then, as before, prudence and temperance say one life for five is best. If other factors are involved, then there would be a struggle between prudence and temperance. In other words, although leaning towards the evolutionist point of view, the patriarch will not be looking for such a "cut and dry" answer.

iii) Christian: As before, it will look a lot like the patriarchist, but the Theological Virtues will help the Christian once the decision is made. In this case, faith and hope will be useful to assuage the inevitable guilt of taking someone's life, no matter what the circumstances. The Christian should humble his will in the faith and hope that God's plan will be for the best of all involved.

5) Elvira's Decision: This one I will leave a bit open-ended. It originally was used to describe Kantianism, which suggests that moral maxims must always and in all cases be followed. This example uses the maxim that lying is always and everywhere wrong. As a result, the plot is contrived so that Elvira must tell the truth, even though she thinks it will result in a murder. As the story is told, she tells a lie and the murder takes place because of the lie. I include it here because I think it does a

great job showing why the flexible Christian method is better than the inflexible nature of using only one virtue in a moral code (a common practice for *a la carte* patriarchs). This example is the polar opposite of utilitarianism (talked about in **Topic D**), where the *outcome* was the only thing of importance. For Kant, only the *means* are important.

In the scenario, Elvira and Tony are eating in the kitchen at the back of their house. There is a knock on the door and Elvira goes to answer it while Tony stays behind. At the door is an assassin who has come to kill Tony. He asks if Tony is home, Elvira lies and says "no," and the assassin turns to leave. Unfortunately, Tony was suspicious of the visitor and followed Elvira at a distance, out of sight but able to overhear everything. Scared, he runs back to the kitchen, goes out the back door, circles around the house, is met by the assassin as the assassin is leaving, and is promptly killed. If Elvira had told the truth, Tony would still be alive as the assassin would have been looking for him in an empty house.

I hope the gentle reader can appreciate how contrived this story is, all with the deliberate intention to demonstrate how a lie is always wrong. Kantianism is an example of a man-made moral code. It is inflexible to the point that the moral lesson must be forced. After all, why didn't Tony run straight out the back instead of circling around front? That was the only option that would have saved his life regardless of how the interaction between Elvira and the assassin went. But the question remains, what should have Elvira done, regardless of the outcome that would follow it? All three moral codes will at least allow a lie, but for different reasons. Also, to be fair to Elvira, I am approaching the solutions from her perspective (limited knowledge), *not* the reader's (perfect knowledge).

i) Evolutionist: Protection of the species, in this case the members of the household, dictates Elvira should do anything and everything possible to convince the assassin to leave, short of endangering her own life. Lying appears to be the best option here.

ii) Patriarchist: Just like with the Gestapo and hidden Jews example (**Topic H.3**), protecting the life of Tony is a greater way of displaying justice than being honest with the assassin. Temperance says she need not endanger her *own* life for Tony, which means she can ignore more reckless options available to her (such as shouting a warning or fighting). It is prudence that is the most critical here. In order to be believable, Elvira cannot spend more than a moment to come up with options and their likely outcomes. Saying "yes" will certainly get Tony killed (based on her assumption that Tony was still eating in the kitchen), but is her best chance for her own survival. If she says "no," the assassin may either believe her or not. If he believes her, then both she and Tony are safe. If the assassin does not believe her, then he is likely to kill her as well as Tony. She might try to talk the assassin out of it. This admits that Tony is home, but has a chance (however small) of saving his life. The prudent and temperate solution would have the best chance to keep Tony alive but, if it failed, would at least have a good chance for her to survive the encounter. Lying appears to be the best choice available.

iii) Christian: Only slightly different from the partriarchist, but it is a critical difference. The virtue of charity gives Elvira the option to die for Tony in faith and hope of a greater good to come out of it. This opens up the possibility of Elvira openly resisting and/or raising an alarm in an attempt to save Tony. In any case, prudence would continue to seek the highest probability of success for both their lives, but now losing her life to save Tony is looked at as heroic, not foolish.

Conclusion: There are those who rail against Christian morality as if it were oppressing them. While this behavior itself is nothing I care to give much thought to, the reactions of Christians to such

outrageous claims *is* something that I do care about. The passivity to these claims has not only allowed some non-Christians to act as spoiled children and to dictate terms to Christians, but many otherwise reasonable and well-meaning skeptics may get a false sense of moral superiority over theists. Christians, seeking to find common ground with all human beings (a noble effort if done with temperance and prudence), are overlooking the reality that a growing sub-culture is creating moral codes that are incompatible with Christianity. This intolerance cannot coexist with Christianity forever; one or the other will eventually have to be removed. For the other extreme case, those who think Christianity deserves a "comeuppance" for what it "did" to pagans ought to think very hard about what our culture would look like if Christian morals do indeed disappear.

People who ask why they need religion in order to be "good" people nonetheless base their ideas of what "good" looks like by Christian standards. They just exclude any parts that are inconvenient for their desired lifestyle (*a la carte* patriarchism). The only way for one to appreciate just how important Christian teachings are to a culture is to remove them from the culture. We can't do this in the empirical sense without destroying our culture, as our culture is built on Christian values. But we can discuss what such a world would be like rationally, with thought exercises like those shown above.

When one chooses a non-Christian moral code and promotes it as being somehow "enlightened," Christians need to ask questions, be prepared to listen fully to explanations, and then question practical applications of the ethics that come from this morality. It takes a little skill to find the flaws in these alternative moral codes, but it is a skill quickly learned. Patriarchists generally pick something that approximates a single Christian virtue (**Topic F**), in which case all one has to do is pick another virtue and force a dilemma between the two. For example, if another says, "My moral beliefs are simple, just be a nice person" (a variation of justice), one can pick prudence and fortitude and reply, "So, if I try to get the keys from my drunk friend at a bar, and he gets upset at me, I should just apologize and let him drive himself home?" It is unlikely the interlocutor will simply fold at this point, but don't worry about that. The fact remains that the interlocutor is now on the defensive. He can either double down on his original statement and look foolish to anyone else who might be listening, or he can admit that his simple idea of morality is flawed ("well, of course being nice doesn't mean you can't be forceful"). In the former case, one has won the argument in the eyes of any spectators. In the latter case, he is still in the conversation, and one can direct where the conversation goes next ("so how do you decide what type and how much force to use?" can lead to discussion of prudence, temperance and even fortitude). And even if one does not win him over, one might at least make him reluctant to be so aggressive with other Christians. While conversion to Christianity is the desired "win," keeping him from spreading toxic ideas is a big victory in itself.

I didn't pick this example by chance, as the world seems to focus too much on justice and not enough on prudence and temperance. Christians often show too little fortitude in response to such toxic ideas. We, as Christians, must get people to question why it is they think they don't need Christian morality, and getting them to see the flaws in their own ethical code is a way to do so without taking away from their dignity.

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Original Publication Date: 23 February 2023

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