

## Part VII Videos 32 through 39 (Morality)

**Introduction:** In this block, we discuss various moral theories as designed by man. These are not discussed in general groups like I listed in **Topics II.D.6** and **II.F.5.ii**, but are specific theories formulated by specific individuals. We do see theism make an appearance in **videos 33** and **34** as we talk about Natural Law Theory as presented by Saint Aquinas. But even here we focus on the rational, or cardinal, aspect of morality. Nonetheless, one should review what I wrote in **Block II** as it helps understand what is presented here. While I feel the block does a good job describing the pros and cons of each theory, please note that all theories ultimately have the same basic problem: grounding. Even if all mankind could accept a non-Christian moral theory, we still have the question of why should man act ethically? This problem is actually acknowledged by Hank in **video 33** (min 1:20).

If one remembers what I said concerning the Fathers of Atheism (**Topic I.B.3**), they assumed that man had evolved into a moral creature and only needed to be freed of the fetters of Christianity in order to be a positive moral agent. By assuming man would normally choose good over bad when given a choice, the lessons of chaotic Greek democracies were forgotten, religion in general (and Christianity in particular) was discouraged, and a major push was made for the public to actively participate in government activities. All in the name of the common good. This is how the socialist democracies were born. Almost immediately, it was discovered just how bankrupt the idea of man's basic goodness was. Since the elected officials of the democratic socialist states could not ground their ideas in the charity (**Topic B.1.iii**) of man, they ground their ideas in power (laws). One will behave or else face legal discipline. And the tyranny of such laws was largely accepted by the public because they were just as much the tyrants as those in office. At least until the 1960s, when the excesses of the socialist governments became too great to hide. Yet even today, the lure of socialism is popular because each new generation somehow thinks they can do "better" than those who tried it before.

Of all the theories that will be presented here, only "Divine Command Theory" (**video 33**) and Saint Aquinas' "Natural Law Theory" (**video 34**) are grounded in a god (specifically Jehovah), and only with Natural Law Theory do we see the philosopher not only admitting its human limitations, but offering a solution to these limitations.

**A) Christian Morality:** The Catholic Church (as well as some other Christian churches) recognizes four tiers of Moral Law. The first and second tiers concerns us the most in this series, but all play a part in understanding Christian morality.

**1) Eternal Law:** This is the source of all law, and even Jehovah will abide by it. It is not that it is higher than Jehovah. Jehovah abides by it because He is unchanging (**Topic II.A.1**), and therefore will not contradict Himself. What concerns man most about Eternal Law is the promise of eternal life with Him if we say "yes" to Him. It is from here that we find the Theological Virtues (**Topic B.1**).

**2) Natural Law:** This is the law man understands through reason. Because it is based on man's reason, man can develop it on his own. This law is sometimes called "universal morality" because cultures throughout the history of the world keep coming up with similar ideas of what morality looks like. C.S. Lewis often called this "the Tao," and gave an excellent demonstration of how common Natural Law is throughout man's history in the appendix to his book, *The Abolition of Man*. Even within the confines of this series we see proof of this. My claim that classical philosophers were remarkably compatible with Christianity (**Topic I.B.1**), and that the Fathers of Atheism sought to duplicate the Christian moral code without Jehovah (**Topic I.B.3**) is demonstrated rather well in this block. Natural Law is the basis for the Cardinal Virtues (**Topic B.2**), and all present theories are

derived from it (although some are more successful than others).

**3) Revealed Law:** This law is unique to religion, as it refers to the laws as revealed to, and spoken by, the prophets. For Christians, it is primarily what is found in the Bible and apostolic tradition. But the Bible shows examples of all four types of law, so one must still understand how to interpret the Bible to know which scripture is an example of which law. While a worthwhile pursuit, it is not necessary for the discussion of this series.

**4) Civil and Ecclesiastical Law:** These laws are necessary for the smooth operation of any organization. So much of what is regulated does not have a "right" or a "wrong" way of doing something, only that there needs to be a standard way of doing it. Since the officials of any organization are responsible for the smooth operation of the organization, it would be immoral of them not to implement such laws. Perhaps the the easiest example to present is the law governing which side of the road one is to drive on. It does not matter which side of the road people drive on, but they do need to be consistent. There is no moral difference between the United States having its drivers on the right side of the road while the United Kingdom has them on the left. There is, however, a major moral difference between the U.S. and the U.K. compared to some country that let its drivers be on whichever side of the road they want.

**B) Christian Virtues:** The seven great Christian virtues can be broken down into three Theological Virtues and four Cardinal Virtues as explained below.

**1) Theological Virtues:** Theological Virtues can only come from a deity; man cannot find them on his own. I will be speaking specifically about Christian Theological Virtues here.

**i) Faith:** to have trust in. Christians have faith that Jehovah will keep His word to save those who believe in Him.

**ii) Hope:** a longing for something yet to be. Christians have hope that they will go to heaven despite our mistakes.

**iii) Charity:** in short, it is agape (**Topic VIII.A.4**): to love the unlovable. Christians believe we are all unlovable, but that Jehovah loves us anyway. We, by receiving this love from Jehovah, are called to show that same love to others so we can be more like Jehovah.

**2) Cardinal Virtues:** Born of reason, these virtues can and have been discovered by man worldwide. As such, they are potentially universal to any culture.

**i) Prudence:** to find options and to foresee the outcomes of decisions.

**ii) Justice:** to consider the dignity (**Topic III.A.4**) of *all* involved.

**iii) Temperance:** to apply the right amount of effort for any given situation.

**iv) Fortitude:** to persevere against difficulty.

**C) Video Block VII (Morality):** As we go through the problems of all the theories presented in this block, I believe one will find that the weakness they share in common comes from ignoring one or more of the seven virtues as explained above. Certainly one virtue may be more important than another

in any given situation, but no virtue can be ignored or mis-represented without consequence. In all the videos of this block, the Theological Virtues (**Topic B.1**) are held back, and one can easily see how much different our lives are without them. Saint Aquinas' work on Natural Law Theory (**video 34**) was developed in the context of the Theological Virtues, but the other theories were either ignorant of them (Virtue Theory in **video 38**) or deliberately ignored them. Even among the Cardinal Virtues (**Topic B.2**), however, we will almost always find at least one of them missing as well.

**1) Video 32 (Metaethics):** While not unique to the series, I think this video does a great job explaining just why the "either/or" mentality (which is based on Plutonian theories) does not work. As I hope I showed above when I talked about Moral Law and the seven virtues, what we really need is a system flexible enough to account for all the great differences of cultural needs, yet firm enough that a meaningful ethical code can be had for all.

**i) Anti-Realism:** To base a moral code on moral anti-realism, which for a Christian means to give up faith and hope, is essentially anarchy. We revert to a "might makes right" mentality as prudence and justice become corrupted and only apply to oneself. Furthermore, temperance becomes meaningless. But there is something about moral anti-realism that I do agree with: the moral "facts" are not worldly; they are supernatural.

**ii) Scientism:** To suggest science can come up with a moral code is sheer lunacy. The essence of science is to demonstrate what *can* be done, while the essence of morality is to teach what *should* be done. I can scientifically prove it is possible to put a key in an ignition, turn it and then operate foot pedals and a steering wheel while drunk. Now, one may say, "But, doesn't science also prove driving drunk increases the chance of having an accident, especially a fatal one?" Yes, but so what? I can also scientifically prove everyone will die anyway. Science and other fields (such as history and literature) are invaluable in presenting relevant facts to help us to be prudent and temperate, but they cannot fill the role of the Theological Virtues justice or fortitude.

**iii) Thought Bubble:** We see that the would-be robber had absolutely no charity or justice concerning the woman. Furthermore, his application of prudence was shown to be in error. By no means can his actions possibly be considered ethical by Christian morals, even if they did have a fortuitous outcome. To suggest the robber deserved a reward is a Utilitarian view, so remember this scenario for **video 36**.

**iv) Grounding:** I agree completely that any moral theory and its inherent ethical code needs to be grounded in something. What I don't agree with is that this block is only concerned with grounding when it comes to "theistic" theories. When the atheistic theories are presented, no mention of grounding is made. This is a deceitful way of avoiding what the atheistic theories really are grounded with: the power to make laws. The problem in grounding morality in law, as observed by C.S. Lewis, is that laws are made by politicians, and politicians are primarily interested in things that are immediate. Morality should be concerned with things that are timeless. As such, laws should follow moral theory, not the other way around (remember the argument on making Superman a "person" on grounds he was "agreeable" in **Topic IV.d.4**).

**v) Capital Punishment:** I would also suggest that the matter of capital punishment is misrepresented here. The prohibition against killing is indeed a common moral truth but, like all moral truths, it needs to be seen in the light of the virtues. Faith and hope are generally our "insurance" that God will make right any honest mistake we make. Charity for the criminal suggests the criminal should not be punished in excess of his crime. But justice tells us to not just look at the criminal. We

need to look at the victim(s), friends and family of the victim(s), and the impact on society as a whole. Temperance is used to balance the human dignity of the criminal against the legitimate need of protecting society. We use prudence to bring all these factors together for a final decision on the criminal's fate. This will be important again in **videos 36** and **37**.

**vi) Parting Shot:** I find it ironic that Hank speaks of the problem with cultural based morality justifying the Holocaust. In **video 36**, he will actually provides a moral theory that justifies what the Nazi's did.

**2) Video 33 (Divine Command Theory):** Quite frankly, this video is ignorant on a scale so large that we have to go all the way back to **video 12** to find anything remotely similar. We actually see a perfect demonstration of the Christian idea of pride at min 0:36, when it is suggested that humans should decide what is and is not revealed by Jehovah. While it is indeed rational to expect Jehovah to give us guidance, it is not rational to expect a computer-like algorithm of "if-then" statements for every single possible situation we could find ourselves in.

**i) Which God?:** One should review what was said about the different deities in **Block II (Topics II.A through II.D)**. Hank, while acknowledging the "big G Judaeo-Christian God," still compares Him to all other gods ("or some other deity, or group of gods," min 1:00). Pagan "morality" was to keep humans as subjects of their gods, while Allah seeks friendship, and Jehovah seeks fatherhood. We cannot expect non-Christian morality to look like Christian morality (**Topic II.D.6**). And this error is continued in the Euthyphro Problem, where at min 3:40 we see the singular "big G" God used, not the plural "little g" gods that were proper for the pagan world Socrates lived in.

**ii) The Bible:** I want to go back the basics and talk about the essence and accidentals of the Bible. The essence of the Bible is to show Jehovah's revelation of His presence and His divine plan of salvation for us. Therefore, the Bible is *not* a rule book (as Hank claimed here at min 1:30 and in some other places), a sole source of truth (*Solas Scriptura*), a history lesson, a scientific explanation of reality, an attempt to dictate societal norms, or any other popular idea that comes along. The Bible does, however, have these aspects as accidentals. But since they are mere accidentals, they need not be absolute, literal truth. Their value lies in supporting the truth of God's existence and His plan of salvation, not the other way around. All apparent contradictions or "absurd" ideas can be explained away if one understands this relationship. There is an entire college level course in seminaries on how to understand the Bible called "hermeneutics," which use processes called "exegetical methods" (a separate college course). They are beyond the scope of this paper to discuss, but I mention this to explain that one cannot simply find a single method to understand the Bible as a whole.

**iii) Biblical Problems:** To address the "problems" Hank had with the Bible from the provided verses, I will classify them as "dress code," "killing" and "social attitudes" for simplicity. The "dress code" example is governed by Civil and Ecclesiastical Law (**Topic A.4**). They are for the orderly conduct of the organization they represent, and therefore need not necessarily be followed by all cultures at all times. If one understands the culture that existed when the Biblical "dress codes" were written, one will know that linen was used for undergarments. To display it on external clothing was rude in the same way that some people wear their pants below the hips today. The difference is that in those days people had the fortitude to promote justice for all concerned, not just to the dissatisfied minority.

The commandment against "killing" is better understood in the context of "murder," which Hank previously claimed as a legitimate distinction (**video 28**) when trying to describe "personhood."

It is common in the realm of legal justice to hold those *outside* the law, either from not being a citizen or after performing certain crimes, as not protected *by* the law. This is what is understood by the Jews based on the revelation they received from Jehovah. Christians, with the new revelation, are certainly called to transcend the "letter of the law" and endorse the "spirit of the law," but we still have a moral obligation to do what is right for society as a whole and to obey legal authority. Executing certain criminals, and death caused by police or soldiers in the line of duty are not by necessity unbiblical or unchristian, but should be looked at in the light of the seven virtues (**Topic B**).

Hank's attitude on "social attitudes" is completely opposed to Christian ideals. The world's attitudes (hedonism, commercial materialism, classical materialism, socialism, individualism, minimalism, atheism and all kinds of other "isms") are all condemned by Christianity. Morality should not be based on a popularity contest (something Peter Singer clearly implies in **video 44**) but on universal benefits to mankind *and* guided by God's vision. An act may be wrong even if the whole world does it, and an act might be right even if nobody does it. Furthermore, just because something comes from Revealed Law (**Topic A.3**) does not mean it is impractical (an example of the Genesis Fallacy, where something is assumed to be true or false based on who said it as opposed to its own merits). Indeed, in most cases we can actually arrive at the same conclusions by using a little prudence.

**iv) Euthyphro's Problem:** With that past us, this whole video focuses primarily on Euthyphro's Problem. I simply deny that Euthyphro's Problem has a "devastating" effect on Divine Command Theory, at least from the Christian perspective. The weakness of this argument is that neither horn exists when considering Jehovah. The rebuttal against the first horn was based on the idea that a god could contradict himself. The pagan gods (**Topic II.A.4**) certainly could, and often did, contradict themselves. Shiite Muslims claim Allah can change his mind (the concept of abjuration, with Quo-ran verse 2:106 as a popular example). But Jehovah cannot do this (**Topic II.A.1**).

The second horn is accepted by the Sunni Muslims. For the Jews and Christians however, there is no higher authority than Jehovah. This argument, by Hank's own words, contradicts itself when applied to Jehovah. Far from Euthyphro discrediting Jehovah, Jehovah was actually the answer to what Socrates was seeking; the answer he literally died looking for.

**v) Parting Shot:** Hank's own parting shot against Divine Command Theory at min 8:00, in my opinion, should be well remembered once we get past **video 34**. He claims that a good theory should answer some questions, and I agree. And Divine Command Theory does have its limitations just like any other theory. But Divine Command Theory, at least for Christians, is not meant to be a stand alone theory. Divine Command Theory is founded on Eternal Law (**Topic A.1**) and expressed by the Theological Virtues (**Topic B.1**). Our ability to reason gives us the ability to develop Natural Law Theory (**video 34**) and Virtue Theory (**video 38**), which is expressed by the Cardinal Virtues (**Topic B.2**). Civil and Ecclesiastical Law, for a Christian, are based on the Natural Law and guided by Revealed Law (**Topic A.3**).

**3) Video 34 (Natural Law Theory):** The video is quite good, although Hank's sarcasm is unwarranted. This is one of the few times he speaks of Christianity in a positive way, which may have to do with how closely this theory resembles Virtue Theory (**video 38**). Virtue Theory was the foundation Saint Aquinas used in developing Natural Law Theory. The biggest problem of this video is not so much in failing to describe what Natural Law Theory is, but in taking it out of context. The theory was made to answer the question of whether those who have never heard of Jehovah could be saved. It also was to show that Christianity is not simply fideism, as was suggested in **video 15**.

**i) Proper Context for Natural Law Theory:** Nothing Saint Aquinas says is against the Catholic teachings (indeed, he is the second greatest contributor to Catholic doctrine). Saint Aquinas did not attempt to create his own brand of Christianity (which seems to be the implication here), but rather attempted to understand the mysterious wisdom that underlies Christian teachings. So when Hank tells us that Saint Aquinas sought to seek the natural goodness in everyone, we cannot forget that Saint Aquinas still understood the corruption within us (**video 13**), nor would he disregard the Theological Virtues. When we get to about min 5:55, we again see the old question "Why does a benevolent God allow bad things to happen" get reworded for the topic at hand. The answer as to why people do immoral things all the time despite there being solid rational reasons to do good is pretty obvious. Aquinas gave some good answers, but I will add some comments of my own.

**ii) Disordered Appetites:** Christianity teaches that humans, because of Original Sin, have disordered appetites. No other animal has them. Humans do very few things, other than imagine, reason and practice free will, that other animals don't do. The difference is, we do them in very different ways (consider my examples in **Topic VI.B.4.i**). These differences are not always for the better. When what we do is outside healthy limits (the "golden mean" of **video 38**), we call them disordered. C.S. Lewis called it an addiction, as the pleasure these appetites provide us becomes weaker and weaker despite working harder and harder to satiate them. Saint Aquinas' ideas of "ignorance and emotion" are just another way of describing disordered appetites.

Understanding this is something I think will be key for the rest of the series. Atheists, by rejecting the idea of Jehovah, have at the same time rejected the idea of Original Sin. To them, man's problem is not disordered appetites, but rather "forgetting to be awesome." This may explain why Christian theories are considered flawed when Christians still do bad things, as many atheists assume that, if Christianity were real in the first place, then "remembering to be awesome" would be permanent. But such a miraculous conversion is more along the lines of pagan miracles, not Christian teachings. Actually, much of the discussion in the upcoming secular theories seems to ignore the fact that "forgetting to be awesome" is not the real culprit, but rather not wanting to be awesome in the first place.

**iii) Counter-Arguments:** Hank said there are "lots of problems" with this theory, but only gave two. Furthermore, neither one of them was really a counter-argument, and I find them both lacking. The first was that Natural Law Theory doesn't work if you reject the premise that God set up the world using natural laws (min 7:21). At the very beginning of this video, Hank said quite the opposite, that this theory was designed specifically for those who didn't have a Bible or know Jehovah. Furthermore, the only time Jehovah comes up in the theory at all is to answer why we have a natural desire to find God. Hank even showed evidence that Jean-Paul Sartre agrees with this (min 3:16). So, what exactly is the theory supposed to convince him of that he might reject? All that is lost by not believing in Jehovah is the issue of grounding. But I have been saying all along that this is why atheism ultimately marries up with socialism, because if one is not inspired to "be awesome" based on temperament or faith, then they must be made to "be awesome" under command of law.

The second concern came from David Hume, and his ideas really just demonstrate my point that atheists think there is a problem with Christianity only because some Christians act immorally. While I accept the idea that just because something *is* one way does not mean it *ought* to be that way, this does not, by necessity, mean that just because something *is* one way means it *ought not* to be that way either. Hume is not giving a counter-argument. This is a form of deflection, an attempt to distract us from what is really being said by pursuing a pointless tangent.

Also, I would like to remind the gentle reader what was said in the second half of **Topic II.D.2**. It is indeed horrible when Christians do unchristian things, but does that make the same behavior desirable when non-Christians do it? If the hypocrisy of adherents to a set of morals is the only way to judge a moral code, then all we can look forward to is no moral codes at all. And we see this in the Thought Bubble.

**iv) Thought Bubble:** This demonstration shows my idea of disordered appetites, the need for all seven virtues to work in harmony, and Hume's attempt to distract us from these truths. Killing someone and using their carcass is a grisly matter that weighs charity, justice and fortitude against the prudential concept that at least one person ought to survive. Sexual predation is clearly an absence of charity and justice. Reproducing without limit is both a lack of temperance for oneself and a violation of justice for the children. The matter of couples who can't reproduce is more nuanced, so I'll address that separately (**Topic C.3.vi**).

But if we take a minute to think about what is said here, all these examples are evolutionary based morality, a survival at all costs attitude. Christian morality does not deny the right for survival, but it does, through the Theological Virtues (**Topic B.1**), require the Christian to think of things other than mere survival. Considering that Virtue Theory (**video 38**) teaches the same things as Natural Law Theory, I find it deceitful to imply that a Christian theory can lead to barbarianism when in truth it was Jewish and Christian laws that led man out of savagery (Joy Davidman's book, *Smoke on the Mountain* is an excellent read concerning this matter). In the next block, we will see Singer, who is an avowed utilitarian, speak about various rights, yet a closer look shows he has no concern of the brutality that is required to achieve it.

**v) Sexual Disordered Appetites:** I want to note that sexual drives are the *most* disordered of all disordered appetites. A glutton may eat much more than one person needs, but only exceptionally few of them would eat for even two people. On the other hand, one healthy, young man could theoretically have sex with over a hundred different women in a month. An individual woman is only limited by the needs to eat and sleep when considering the number of theoretical partners she could have in a period of time. The consequences of the disordered sexual drive are generally more severe as well. Overeating at a single meal has no significant effect on the individual. A single wayward sexual encounter can cause a lifetime of radical consequences: broken trust with loved ones, diseases, and responsibilities that come from having children. Considering how disordered this appetite is, as well as how life-changing the potential consequences are, it is certainly prudent to place more restrictions on it than other disordered appetites. If the controls seem harsh, then it is only fitting because the temptations and hazards are even more severe.

**vi) Reproduction:** To start off with, the claim that we should reproduce as much as possible (min 5:38) is NOT what the Catholic Church teaches, as all children have human dignity that deserves justice, which in turn requires the couple to exercise temperance so as to provide a suitable environment for the children to grow up in.

In light of the temptations and dangers associated with the disordered appetite of sex, Christianity restricts intercourse to married couples. In light of the natural goal to reproduce (something Hank endorses without comment in Virtue Theory (**video 38**)), marriage is a union of a male and a female. Married couples who are capable of bearing children should expect to raise children, although prudence and temperance play a factor in *when* they have children and *how many* they have. Couples who are not capable of having children for natural reasons (sterile or post menopause) cannot be in violation of Natural Law since it was nature that made that choice for them:

"*impossibile nulla obligatio*" (there can be no legal requirement to do the impossible, Iustus Celsus-Digesta, 50)

This leads us to the real but unspoken problem many have with Christian Natural Law Theory: it seems unkind to those who want sex but don't want children, particularly homosexuals. To be clear, morality must, at some point, be unpleasant. It is not the purpose of moral teachings to make one feel good about their disordered appetites, but rather to make them feel uncomfortable about engaging in them. Christians define "freedom" as being able to control one's own body, instead of one's body controlling the person. It may seem unfair to tell homosexuals they need to be chaste, but the same rule applies to those who are fertile but don't want marriage and/or children. One can say that this rule is applied inconsistently and therefore discriminates against homosexuals. I do not deny that this is often the case in our current culture, but the proper solution is not to exempt the homosexuals, but rather to enforce it more consistently with heterosexuals. Too many Christians need to look at their own lives, lest their accusations against homosexuals be used against them at judgment time. Fornication is fornication, regardless of who engages in it.

**vii) Clarification:** On a small matter, there is one mistake here Hank made that I think is understandable. Nonetheless, it needs to be corrected. Theological Virtues cannot come from reason, they need to be taught to us. Our need for God (as mentioned in the video) leads us to search for Him, which allows Him to teach us in ways that are not always obvious. Even pagans and atheists can potentially learn from Him. There is a difference between *not knowing* Jehovah and *rejecting* Jehovah. Classic philosophers did not believe in Jehovah, but neither did they reject Him. With varying degrees of clarity, Jehovah was still able to teach them. This is why their theories work so well with Christianity. The Fathers of Atheism and contemporary atheists, however, reject Jehovah, which is why their theories so quickly devolve. Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, at least, recognized this to be true, and Sartre even changed his mind at the end of his life.

**viii) Parting Shot:** Finally, I think Hank's claim that Kantianism is a "better option" failed in epic fashion, but I'll talk in detail about that in the next video.

**4) Video 35 (Kant & Categorical Imperatives):** In this video, Hank did a better job explaining the Christian perspective than most Christians can. I think this is, in no small part, because Kant, although an agnostic, was still very respectful of the God he wasn't sure existed. I agree that morality must be rational (for **videos 15** and **34** in particular), but I find flaws in the way it is expressed here.

**i) Opening Shot:** In the intro, where Hank briefly discusses the previous two videos, I just want to point out that he claimed that Natural Law Theory came from within us. In the respect that Christians are capable of understanding moral truths, he is right. But remember Christian morals are based on all four Laws (**Topic A**), and understood in applying all seven virtues (**Topic B**). The series only addressed two of these eleven concepts, and even then rather briefly.

**ii) Kantianism:** This is a clear example of what I called patriarcism (**Topic II.F.5.ii.e**), as it cherry-picks from other moral codes. Kant claims to use reason, with the presumed assumption that reason is a man-based moral system as opposed to evolutionism. I agree, but not the way Kant intended. No other animal acts with the type of reason meant here (**Topic VI.B.4.i**), which is why I agree it is a man-based system instead of nature-based. But now we are forced to ask the question: if reason is not evolutionary, and one does not believe in a Creator God, then where does this reason come from?



Later on, when we get to the second maxim, we see clear reference to human dignity. But again, no explanation is suggested as to where such dignity comes from. I commend him for acknowledging that dignity is the only way for reason to not devolve into evolutionist morality, as it is something often ignored by the other moral theories. It is here that Kant sought to replace the three Theological Virtues. But now we are faced with the question of where does such dignity come from? Nearly every example we can come up with on what constitutes an "end in itself" can also apply to animals *except* the concept of free will, which is effectively described at min 8:01. This, I agree, solves the dignity problem, but it brings us back to an older issue: how is free will possible without Jehovah (mind and body problem of **video 22**, and free will and determinism (**Block V**)? Regardless of what Kant really thought, I find Hank's claim of "no God required" at min 9:06 to be without merit.

**iii) Hypothetical Imperatives:** Hypothetical imperatives are most certainly real, but they do not fall outside the realm of morality. What we are really seeing here is blurring the line between morality and ethics. Christians believe that humans are moral agents, blessed by Jehovah to decide for ourselves (in a limited manner) what is right and wrong. The whole concept of Civil and Ecclesiastical Law (**Topic A.4**) is testimony to this. We have the freedom to decide if a college degree or a new car is "good" for us as long as we do not violate the seven virtues (**Topic B**). In this case, faith and hope means our smaller plan fits into Jehovah's greater plan. Once we decide that these are "good" things to have, then we act ethically when we study for college entrance exams or get a job to raise money.

**iv) Universal Maxims:** Using reason, we can see that, however vast, our reality consists of a universe that is finite. Furthermore, out of this finite universe, we are further restricted to a infinitesimally small part of it. Anything we consume means some other living being will not be able to consume it. Any action we take means someone else can't take that action at that exact same place and time. If I want some decorative stones to form a square in my front yard while someone else in my household wants the same stones to form a circle, then at least one of us will be disappointed. In a similar vein, we are actually very limited in which maxims we can take on that are "universal." Indeed, as the Thought Bubble shows so well, the best we can hope for is a single, personal maxim. So it better be well thought out. I propose that the only maxim that can truly be universal is to abide by the seven virtues.

**v) Thought Bubble:** We see the presumed maxim of saving one's life when possible (something Singer explicitly endorses in **video 44**) in conflict with the explicit maxim of not lying. In all fairness, two alternative solutions were offered as a means to avoid this dilemma, but it doesn't change the fact that the focus here remains on not lying while protecting Tony is of secondary importance. The next video will reverse this line of thought, but let us proceed with what we have now.

We see that Kant claims Elvira is culpable for Tony's death because of the lie she told (min 5:58). While her lie was certainly a link in the chain of events that led to his death, this is not the same as being guilty. Nor did Tony's death result solely from the lie. The only choice made in the example that could have guaranteed Tony's safety was never discussed. Tony presumably could have run straight back and away from the house. For him to stay in the house or to circle around in front of it meant his life remained in the hands of others and how they would react.

But let us return to Elvira. We are told that, with the lie being told, the assassin was leaving. This is another example of snuck premise (**Topic VI.B.2**). Telling us this blinds us to the fact that the assassin might have entered the house no matter what Elvira said. *We* know that the assassin believed

Elvira, but Elvira didn't have this information available to her when she made her decision. For her to abide by the maxim of not lying, Tony just as easily could have still been killed no matter what she said. I do believe this example is deceitful when it comes to showing why certain moral maxims are important (but not universal, and I'll talk more on their value soon), as the example is so contrived. But if we assume prudence is indeed rational, and understand what the maxim of following the seven virtues means, I think we have, if not necessarily a happier ending, at least one where Elvira's moral position is better understood.

**vi) Thought Bubble Revisited:** Elvira, to be prudent, would have to very quickly consider the outcomes of any option she could come up with. We are told she did not know Tony tagged along to see what was up, so she cannot be faulted for him running around the house like he did. She could, however, be faulted for not trying to stop the assassin from entering. We can all agree that lying is generally immoral, but for her to try to talk the assassin out of the hit is the same as saying Tony was at home. But the justice Elvira needs to show the assassin must be balanced by temperance for the justice Tony's life deserves. The real question of prudence, therefore, is which course of action would best keep the assassin out of the house? I'll let the gentle reader decide which one is more likely to succeed, but whatever choice one makes for her is what one thinks is the most ethical course of action. She should then show fortitude in following it out. Until the whole scenario plays out, Elvira must have faith she did the right thing and hope for a happy outcome. Regardless of the fate of Tony, that prudent decision, if executed, makes her guiltless.

**vii) Unintended Consequences:** This video does, however, identify another very real concern with prudence. So much of what goes on in life has unintended consequences, like Tony running in front of the assassin instead of staying put or running straight out the back. All analogies fall short at some point, and this example falls short because of how absolute our knowledge is of all possible outcomes. Even if we don't know the assassin's response to Elvira's protective efforts (whichever one believes is most prudent), we still know a way for Tony to stay alive no matter what the others do. In real life, our decisions may affect the whole world in ways we don't know. This is why prudence, while the *greatest* virtue, is not the *only* virtue. This is also why having ethical codes comes in handy, such as Revealed Law (**Topic A.3**) in the Bible. The Bible does a very good job of dealing with unintended consequences because it draws upon over three millennia worth of wisdom. But this Thought Bubble is important because it allows us to understand how morality works in a simple setting so we can be prepared to deal with a complex one (as in the next video). It was my intent here to demonstrate the process, not the outcome. It's why I didn't make the choice for Elvira.

**5) Video 36 (Utilitarianism):** Overall, the video is pretty good. Again, notice that it is grounded in ancient philosophers, and therefore much of it has withstood the test of time. Even the Fathers of Atheism presented here are pre-Nietzsche, so the theories assume there is meaning to the universe. We actually make use of prudence, which was mentioned but otherwise ignored in **video 35**. The idea of doing the most good for the most people is the closest this series comes in regard to true justice. But there are still shortcomings here.

**i) Infinite Regress:** But before I go on, I want to poke a little fun at Hank. At min 2:24, Hank found himself starting down an infinite regress path (something he has endorsed over ultimate causation all the way back to **video10**) for our motivation, but here he endorses ultimate causation in the form of happiness. Furthermore, this line of thinking actually leads up to his willingness to kill someone (the Joker), a willingness he doubles down and even triples down on by the end of the video.

**ii) Utilitarianism:** This moral code has many variations, and a great many people do subscribe to the hedonistic lifestyle Hank quickly brushed off. But I'll stick with the ideas Hank talks about. For those who want to know more about utilitarianism, I suggest *Love and Responsibility* (page 18-24 of Grzegorz Ignatik's translation) by Father Wojtyla (later Saint Pope John Paul II) for more information on this moral system.

Utilitarianism is a clear descendant of evolutionism (**Topic II.F.5.ii.b**), as the good of the species always overrides all other considerations. The biggest problem with utilitarianism (as described in the video) is that there is no room for the individual, as one must *always* act for the greater good (paraphrasing min 3:38) in the Principle of Utility. Hank admits to this, but understates it when he said "*sometimes* ... you have to take one for the team." (min 3:53, italics mine). With utilitarianism, you must *always* take one for the team. The only way one can be completely satisfied with the choices is if one's desires are in complete accord with the majority. And since everyone else has to do the same, what we see is that no one is ever really happy or satisfied; everyone is merely getting along. All the time.

I feel the examples of this problem were appropriate. With Act Utilitarianism, there is no room to say "We go where I want to go today and where you want to go tomorrow." This itself may not be convincing, as many people do act charitable. But the very serious reality of this line of thought was demonstrated with the "transplant" example. Rule Utilitarianism seeks to address this problem, but it also falls short. In **video 32**, Hank pointed out that if we are not careful in our moral theory, then we can claim Nazi Germany as being a moral state. If the government can convince the majority that their lives will be better if the minority are removed (as the Nazis did), then does that not make genocide ethical within Rule Utilitarianism? When we get to **Block VIII (Ethics)**, we will see the socialist agenda being forced upon others in many cases.

**iii) Benevolent, Disinterested Spectator:** I would propose that the only one who truly fits this description would be either Jehovah or Allah. Perhaps the word "disinterested" may offend the gentle Christian reader. But in the sense that they love all people equally, I believe this choice of words is appropriate for the context given.

**iv) Christian look at the Batman and the Joker:** The utilitarian view is to look only at the potential victims who will suffer and die the next time the Joker gets out, and so we are led to believe that Batman should kill the Joker to save them. But justice will have us look at the Joker as well, as killing (or even imprisoning) him makes him a victim of sorts, too. We then realize that no matter how much of an aberration he is, justice demands he gets a fair trial. But when we start to think of a trial, we realize that there are attorneys, judges and juries involved. Why are they not taking steps to execute the Joker in order to protect the same society they are supposed to defend? And then we remember that our country (as well as most of the world) has mostly eliminated capital punishment because it is what public opinion demanded. Is it just to blame Batman for the Joker killing again when the very society Batman is trying to protect refuses to be prudent on the matter? In reality, Batman does not kill because it is not his job. For him to bring justice to Gotham, he has to *act* just. If the Joker gets out again, it is not the Batman's fault, it is the fault of the society that does not have the fortitude to be prudent about the matter. I think the dynamic being presented, when looked at from this perspective, shows just how slippery a slope it is for us to all become murderers by proxy when we ignore Jehovah.

**v) Organ Harvesting:** In this, we see the virtue of justice and charity being threatened. And with them threatened, temperance becomes corrupted. Fortunately, prudence won the day in

recognizing that random harvesting of organs will lead to a defective society.

But more importantly, I think, we see just how quickly utilitarians (and other secular moralists) are willing to "water down" their theory when it no longer suits them. Life is complex, and utilitarianism is too simple. Christian morality works when used because it is sophisticated. But the real beauty of Christian morality is that while complex enough to look at reality as it is, it is also intuitive so everyone can use it if they make an honest effort.

**vi) Jim of the Jungle:** Ironically, this is essentially the Batman-Joker argument revisited: kill one to save many. As such, I won't talk much about the virtues themselves but about holding virtue hostage. In the previous video, in order to prove that Elvira was "wrong" for lying, she was given a third option to avoid the moral dilemma: talk the assassin out of it. In this video, Jim was not given such an option. The point of this video was to force Jim into a dilemma: either he is responsible for killing one with his own hands, or responsible for the deaths of twenty by others. This is a subtle way in which our thought process can be manipulated.

What we really have in this example is not a test to see if killing one is preferable to twenty, but if an innocent man can be coerced into becoming evil. Jim could have tried to talk the soldier out of it, as was suggested for Elvira. But why would I suggest that it was wrong for Elvira to talk the assassin out of it while claiming it was what Jim should have done? Elvira would only be responsible for Tony's death if she assisted the assassin in finding Tony. Efforts to stop the assassin, regardless of how successful, makes her guiltless of any murder. Therefore, whichever method to stop the assassin seems the most likely to succeed is, in my opinion, the ethical choice (prudence). But in the case of Jim, if he refuses to kill personally, yet does not attempt to stop the soldiers, then he is guilty of the deaths by complacency. If he kills a villager to save the others, then he is guilty of murder through participation, even if it was coerced. But if he tries to talk the soldiers out of it, regardless of how likely he is to succeed, then he is guiltless of their deaths. By comparing these two examples, we can see how a rational application of the seven virtues can lead to different conclusions for similar situations. This is because they don't so much tell us what to do, as help us look for what is important and then decide for ourselves.

**vii) Parting Shot:** I find it extremely ironic that Hank suggests that we need to be careful with utilitarianism because we might find ourselves justifying what the Nazi's did to the Jews. Since utilitarianism is an evolutionist moral system, this type of ethic is to be expected. This is exactly why one should be careful in seeking a moral system outside Christianity, especially if one has any respect for other people. But that alone is not enough to make me take this parting shot, as I think I already addressed that. What does deserve the parting shot is that Singer, who will dominate the final block of the series, and who also claimed that bestiality is acceptable (**Topic II.D.6**), believes that the Germans were justified in doing what they did. In the first printing of his book, *Practical Ethics*, he said "not...everything the Nazis did was horrendous; we cannot condemn euthanasia just because the Nazis did it." This was removed from all subsequent printings, but he did not retract his statement. He is being deceitful with his world view, as he is withholding information that might turn people away from his other views. But in neither case is he being a hypocrite. An evolutionist will accept genocide as a means of preserving one's own species, and will accept deceit as a means of furthering one's own goals. Christians need to listen to what non-Christians say about morality, because being ignorant of what their moral codes are can be deadly.

**6) Video 37 (Contractarianism):** A great many details presented in this video are simply wrong or grossly misleading. It is true that Thomas Hobbes is credited with this theory, but almost

nothing else in this video can be credited to him. Hobbes did not have a meaningful moral theory, as what little he had to say on morality was extremely vague. Hobbes believed in a sovereign of absolute power. I feel most of this video is more in lines with what Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought, and even then it has been modified. Rousseau was a major influence on Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, and I believe that their views have the most important influence in this video. Most notably is the quote: "Morality will just emerge." (min 1:44). This is a very alchemical concept.

One thing most people don't understand about alchemy is that it was not really about turning lead into gold, it was about turning a lead *object* into a gold object. The lead was believed to be a corruption that prevented the gold from being expressed, so alchemists were trying to destroy or remove the lead so the gold "could just emerge." The object, therefore, did not really change from lead to gold, but rather was purified of the lead so the gold could shine through. I say this because Hegel was an alchemist, and Marx was the most influential promoter of Hegelian thought. And much of the alchemist remained in Marx's teachings.

Furthermore, while true contractarians believed in a formal government, Marx sought an end of government. He believed that the people, once they became enlightened, would no longer need a government because they would simply do the right thing naturally. In other words, "Morality will just emerge." So not only is this quote alchemist, it perfectly expresses Marx's idea of humanity perfected. Besides misrepresenting Hobbes, this quote proves just how important alchemy actually is to socialist theory.

Also, while Hobbes was clearly a radical authoritarian, most other political philosophers (such as Rousseau and John Locke) were much more liberal. But none of them promoted such a disdain of formal government like Marx did. It was Marx, who studied Rousseau as well as Hegel, who suggested that social mores need only be instituted by the consent of the people. I find it very dishonest and deceitful to promote Hegel and Marx under the name of Hobbes. Indeed, Hobbes' view of government was the polar opposite of what Marx desired, and no U.S. citizen should feel comfortable with either one's views (the U.S. Constitution was mostly influenced by Locke). Hiding socialist ideas in Hobbes' work is another critical piece of evidence that this show is subtly promoting socialism to our young.

But despite the false morality of the video, the video *does* do a great job in explaining why we need society and how society works. In other words, while Hobbes' conclusions were wrong, his observations were correct. I feel this social lesson needs to be taught at every school in the United States today (although with some caveats I will soon address). One just has to recognize the subtle inferences to enlightened individualism here (the socialist ideal), and note that at no time is a formal government really considered (which is what Hobbes really spoke of).

Now that I have put some facts straight, I will address several things mentioned in the video as they were presented, and not attempt to correct any other historical inconsistencies. After all, just because this is not true contractarianism does not mean that it cannot be a moral system. And despite the socialist undertones, the video actually goes a long way to promote *laissez faire* capitalism (which I will address towards the end).

**i) Contractarianism Flaws:** To being with, this system requires all humans to be rational. As any Star Trek fan knows, humans are not rational. This reality is the ultimate downfall of any codified moral system, and the only philosopher presented in the series who accounted for this was Saint Aquinas and his Natural Law Theory (he claimed we are "emotional" in **video 34**).

Secondly, those who benefit the most from contractarianism are those who feel no obligation to fulfill their responsibilities, yet are surrounded by those who do. This is addressed here with defectionism, but I feel it was grossly understated. Even those who fulfill their responsibilities in the literal sense may still fail to fulfill them in the spirit in which they were intended. Remember the boat owner in **video 14**, who sent a whole crew and passengers to their deaths because he refused to make repairs to his boat? It was clearly explained that he broke no laws, and no indication was given that he used undue influence with officials. He was not even acting as a defectionist. But those with the resources to avoid or ignore the consequences of breaking the contract can thrive in freedom while others are fettered with the limitations the contract places on them. Nearly every legitimate criticism of capitalism comes from this reality. This is why natural born citizens do not need to take a specific oath to be part of the country's contract. They have presumably spent a whole lifetime being indoctrinated on their responsibilities.

Thirdly, the idea that morality can change (something Hank clearly sees as a plus based on the last few words he says before giving the lesson review) is not so cut and dry. Most social mores are along the lines of Civil and Ecclesiastical Law (**Topic A.4**). In this respect, contractarianism rightly flourishes. But some changes in social mores, such as sexual promiscuity, will always be wrong no matter how much society as a whole embraces it.

Fourthly, while it is true that we generally benefit from our society, there are certainly cases when one may very much wish to leave it, but practical considerations make it difficult or impossible. If it were otherwise, I've no doubt that many more people would leave states with high income taxes for those with less. For a more horrific and extreme example of this mentality, let us remember that Nazi Germany originally desired the Jews to leave their country, and only turned to genocide when no other country in the world was willing to accept them as exiles.

For my final point on this theory's weakness, I want to ask who is bound to obey, and is therefore protected by, contractarianism? We spent an entire block questioning exactly what personhood is (**Block IV**), and we are not done yet. In **video 42**, we will be told that animals have the same rights as we do, yet in **video 45** Hank has to declare the *assumption* that unborn fetuses are "persons." In this video, Hank claims slavery is wrong because the slaves can never benefit from the contract. But if the slaves are not considered persons (which, by legal definition, they are not), is Hank's claim that contractarianism denounced slavery really accurate? This is not just a hypothetical question on my part. We see Hank saying "By enjoying the goods that the system provides -- you are also expected to pay in" (min 4:06) here, but in **video 43** (where a claim is made against children owing their parents anything), this concept is challenged. And it is not because **video 43** ignored contractarianism; it specifically claims contractarianism does not apply because children had no choice in the matter. I would argue that slaves have no choice in the matter, either. While this does not discredit the theory as Hobbes presented it, it does show just how easily morality can be perverted without something to ground it in.

**ii) Hidden Cost:** As contractarianism is so closely related to capitalism, it becomes corrupted in much the same way. With a pulse on current events (2020-2022 A.D.), a great many young adults are eager and willing to enter a contract with certain politicians for free college. They are essentially giving these politicians power to control their future education. The problem is, once said contract is made, the students are honor bound to abide by it: "This theory starts with the assumption that we get to choose what responsibilities we incur, so we're all held to a high standard for keeping the agreements we choose to make." (min 8:26). If these politicians keep the promise of free college, but decide when

the student gets to go to college, which college the student goes to, and what major the student studies, then the students have no moral ground within contractarianism from which to object, as they freely entered this contract. It is here that socialism poisons *laissez faire* capitalism. If one want to remain free, one has no choice but to educate oneself on what contracts one enters in.

**iii) Thought Bubble:** I want to point out that the Thought Bubble is really just a contemporary update to Pascal's Wager (**video 15**). By the way, when strangers play this game in scientific experiments (it is, as mentioned in the video, expressed in many different ways), it was found that to get someone to "rat out" the other, the benefit for doing so needed to be at least twice that as for remaining loyal.

**iv) Parting Shot:** People's natural desire for immediate personal benefit is overwhelmingly strong, and one is quite naive to assume that reason will always win out.

**7) Video 38 (Aristotle & Virtue Theory):** This is another great video and is a perfect example of my claim that ancient philosophers had discovered the idea of universal morality. It also shows how easily it was incorporated into Christian teachings (**video 34**). Finally, it is refreshing to see how meaning and value are useful to philosophical discussion when we are not hampered by extreme rationalism. The Thought Bubble was simply superb in explaining prudence (but not "courage" as it claimed -- more later).

**i) God's Role:** The comment "But for Aristotle, this isn't about God's plan; it's about nature." (min 2:16) is misleading on at least two accounts. For one, nature *is* part of Jehovah's plan. There is no reason to suggest they are separate (Saint Aquinas' idea wasn't called *Natural Law Theory* by accident). But, more importantly, Aristotle was not *opposed* to Jehovah, he merely wasn't *aware* of Jehovah. Indeed, Aristotle came amazingly close to discovering Jehovah through his own means. This video is a perfect example of how philosophy, when not fettered with the idea that Jehovah must be explained away, actually draws us closer to Him. We see how Jehovah can make Himself known to those who seek Him regardless of cultural background.

**ii) Eudaimonia:** We see the use of essence here, and I don't disagree with how it was presented. Eudaimonia is fully compatible with the Christian ideal of "being the best version of yourself you can be." Also consider how "proper functioning" fits so well as the counter to what I have been calling disordered appetites, both in name as well as purpose. For my final observation on the theory in general, also note how sophisticated Virtue Theory is. Aristotle does not allow a simple rule to be true all the time; he treats each situation as being unique. Classical philosophers were not preaching to the masses, but to the intelligentsia. The masses generally didn't care for such things, as they didn't have the luxury to do so. This is in stark contrast to the Fathers of Atheism (who were trying to stir up the masses) and the contemporary atheists (who are trying to keep the masses stirred). This video, by example, demonstrates how the atheist theories strive to be simplistic and easily understood. By oversimplifying moral fixes for a complex world, however, they fall apart quite easily. Unfortunately, this series has likewise presented Christian teachings as being overly simple.

Also note how sharply contrasted eudaimonia is to socialism. Eudaimonia focuses on the self, socialism on the masses. Eudaimonia is ultimately about being the best one can be; socialism is about ensuring no one is better than anyone else. I won't belabor this point any further, but if there is one thing to be taken from this block into the next, this is it. The one and only time in all of **Block VIII** that one is encouraged to focus on oneself instead of others is when the "others" are one's parents (**video 43**). The excitement for eudaimonia in this video unfortunately dies here in order to make room

for the socialist based ethics the rest of the course covers.

**iii) Virtue:** I have defined the seven virtues in the manner consistent with Catholic teachings. This video expressed its own ideas of virtues with their own definitions. Unfortunately, they do not exactly match up so I need to reconcile them. What the video calls "courage," I called prudence. The "Golden Mean" is not called a virtue by this video, but it is what I called temperance. Generosity falls under charity (or agape). While I do not feel the video misused the words it chose, I do think the lack of consideration on what these words mean is a small mar on an otherwise great production.

**iv) Thought Bubble:** An awesome demonstration of how the seven virtues work together. The bystander's sense of justice was outraged by the mugging, and he desired to act out of charity. He had faith and hope that a greater good could come out of some action of his. He used temperance to weigh the merit of each option prudence allowed him to think of and then, with the help of fortitude, execute the option chosen.

**v) Good Intentions:** Wanting to be good is not enough. I'm sure we all know someone who routinely causes more harm than good in their efforts to be "helpful." They are the ones who look insulted when told what they did was not helpful. While the spirit is willing in these people, their pride gets in the way. They are more concerned with the *idea* of being good than they are of actually *doing* good. Aristotle's teachings are clearly too sophisticated to call this behavior "virtuous," but our culture (in the name of "kindness") tells us to accept this "help" with a smile. I just want to be clear that Virtue Theory, while it emphasizes doing good, does not accept such a corrupted outlook.

**vi) Learning Virtue:** On a more serious note, I do have some issue with the discussion about how one becomes a virtuous person. If one remembers in **video 22**, the idea that Mary learned something by stepping out of her black and white room and into a world of color was considered a "begging the question" fallacy. Yet when it comes to Aristotle's claim that virtue can only be learned through experience and not books, the concept not challenged. Like with "infinite regress" versus "ultimate causation," and "free will" versus "determinism," the series is not consistent in its internal logic.

Of course, I agree that virtue is a learned skill, that one must practice it, and that there will be a learning curve. I disagree that it can't be learned from books, at least in part. There is no rational reason why a "moral exemplar" (min 6:30) cannot be found in a book as well as face-to-face. I agree that we all have an innate desire to find a moral exemplar, but I disagree that we are inherently good at finding them. I feel far too many of our nation's youth make poor choices in whom they seek to emulate.

I find the general discussion on the moral exemplar beginning at min 6:40 to look a lot like the discussions concerning fideism in **video 15**, where Blaise Pascal said one should just act like one believes in Jehovah until one does. Again, this series is showing favoritism through its inconsistent application of logic. It often implies a certain methodology is "wrong," and has even called at least one theory "dangerous" (**video 14**) when Jehovah is involved, yet endorses the same methodology for secular equivalents. At the very least, this series does not make it clear as to why it is acceptable to follow Aristotle's ideas this way but not the Christian equivalent.

In any case, Muslims, as well as many atheists, still look to Jesus as the perfect moral exemplar. They can do this because they are not denying the historical truth of Jesus, or the impact of His life and



teachings. They only deny the claim of divinity.

**vii) Sexual Relationships:** One of the complications Hank brought up with Natural Law Theory (**video 34**) was that Natural Law Theory prohibited sexual relationships between same sex couples. Both Natural Law Theory and Virtue Theory claim that part of our essence is to reproduce ("... we're animals - so all the stuff that would indicate proper functioning for an animal holds true for us as well -- we need to grow and be healthy *and fertile*" (min 1:46, italics mine)). For Hank to find homophobia to be a fault with a theory that is grounded in Jehovah but not in an otherwise identical secular theory is hypocritical.

**viii) Begging the Question:** While I agree that all should strive for "eudaimonia" (it is, as I said before, in perfect accord with Christian teachings), Hank has not given us a reason to do so outside of Jehovah. I find this puzzling, because at min 7:03 he asks "ok but: why? What's your motivation? What if you have no desire ..." To call "being virtuous" the pinnacle of humanity still fails to answer why one would want to be virtuous. This response is assuming that we *should* be motivated because we *are* motivated.

**ix) Parting Shot:** I find it ironic for a series that pushes so hard for a "rational" reason to believe in anything, to suddenly accept this theory at face value. This is almost the only teaching in the series where there is no counter-argument given (although the counter-arguments in **Block VIII** are rather weak). Whether written into the original script or not, Hank clearly enjoyed his chance to endorse a thinly veiled "Don't Forget to be Awesome" episode.

**8) Video 39 (Moral Luck):** As we come to the end of the videos that are well put together in regards to explaining complex issues, we have a final example of how close atheists (even contemporary ones) can come to being right, yet still fall short. Now, ever since **video 25**, we have been pursuing a line of thought that implies free will and imagination, but with this video we begin the slide back into determinism by questioning how much is actually in our control.

I do want to make a couple of points that, while minor in themselves, I still find important when considering the work as a whole. The first one, that "ought implies can" (min 1:53), is in conflict with what was presented in Kantianism. If one assumes "ought implies can" is correct (and Hank explicitly claims that this is one of the few maxims almost everyone agrees to at min 2:07) then Elvira's position became even worse than previously imagined. She was in a position to tell the truth and she was in a position to try to save Tony's life. By this standard, she could tell the truth or she could try to save Tony's life by lying, thereby created a paradox of her being unable to make a moral choice, so she ought to do nothing at all.

I also want to point out that "ought implies can" was basically a "gut feeling" justification, as was the conclusion in the Thought Bubble where things can be wrong even if no harm appears to have been done (I'll address this shortly). But similar arguments presented in **video 15** concerning the existence of Jehovah were ultimately ridiculed by Russell's Teapot. Also, in **video 42**, Hank refuses to accept treating animals differently without a well thought out line of reasoning, to the point he explicitly suggests such an effort means "opting out of rational discourse altogether." (min 8:22 of **video 42**). The series is clearly allowing rules to slip when it suits their needs, yet demand those with dissenting opinions follow the rules to an absurd degree.

**i) Nagel:** I want to go back to the old argument of free will versus determinism (**Block V**). It seems to me that Thomas Nagel *wants* to believe in free will, talks himself out of it, finds

himself with a deterministic answer he finds disagreeable, and then arbitrarily goes back to free will so he can condemn both of the drunk drivers. Perhaps this was not Nagel's actual line of thought, but that is the way it is presented here. At min 5:20, we see Hank explicitly endorsing free will: "Now, we can definitely work against these dispositions that we have..." Immediately after this, Nagel seems to be starting down the road to determinism with "...that doesn't change the fact that some of us have to work really hard..." (min 5:27). And, in the end, Nagel decides that only the factors we have control over matter (so, once again, free will).

**ii) Luck:** I do believe that "luck" is an inappropriate word here, as it indicates randomness. But this is just my opinion and doesn't change things. For skeptics, "luck" is simply the unpredictable experiences we will have as a result of the unfathomable workings of a materialistic and deterministic reality. It superficially resembles the Christian point of view that we never experience anything Jehovah didn't allow. But there is a subtle difference in the fact that, with Jehovah, there is still control in what happens in our lives, just not *our* control.

**iii) Injustice:** Regardless of what one believes (Jehovah, karma, determinism, etc.), much good and bad will go unnoticed in this life. Sometimes this will be because of human wickedness (e.g., supervisors ignoring unproductive behavior of certain employees, or refusing to recommend a worthy employee for commendation), and some will be outside of human control (no one was present to see it). This reality goes against justice (**Topic B.2.ii**), and drives our sense of moral outrage. And since life is anything but fair, this outrage can drive us to despair if we are not careful.

For Christians, the virtues of faith and hope for ultimate justice help keep us from going into this despair. For the skeptic, their only options are to try to either control the environment or accept the absurdity of it (**video 16**). While socialism is never explicitly mentioned in the series, pay attention with the remaining videos, as the emphasis is on controlling what people think and do (like wanting to make "hate speech" illegal from **video 28**). In **video 44**, we even see suggestions to make a national policy to end world hunger.

**iv) Circumstantial Luck:** Christianity addresses this, but not as a moral factor. For Christians, this concept is addressed *after* the morality of the matter has been determined. In the case of sin, it is the foundation for mercy and forgiveness. And, if one thinks about it, how can concepts of mercy and forgiveness be meaningful otherwise? To attempt to do so is to play both sides of the moral coin. This may be hard to understand, so let me give an example. If I decide that a child stealing food, even if he is starving to death, is still a crime, then what grounds are left for mercy or forgiveness if found guilty? His criminal nature was recognized even after considering his circumstances. But if I simply decide that stealing is a crime, then I can now show mercy or forgiveness to such a criminal on grounds that he was starving at the time. And this is not a hypothetical situation, either. In England, many such children were hung for being "incorrigible thieves" after being caught stealing food a certain number of times. This, and other excesses in the legal system, had juries acquitting guilty people because there was no room left for mercy once found guilty (this, in turn, led to a major overhaul of the English legal system). But this trap is still common. I think a lot of people, finding it hard to forgive grievous incidents, suffer from not understanding this dynamic. Too much mental energy is spent trying to explain away a behavior as opposed to simply accepting that the act was criminal or sinful to begin with.

**v) Antecedent Circumstances:** I have already addressed this. Nagel is not really introducing a new concept; it is the external equivalent of constitutive luck. Consequential circumstances deserves a little discussion. This concept plays a big part in prudence, and prudence

depends on having reasonable knowledge of what results will come of a given action. The degree of guilt or innocence depends on how much effort is placed into being prudent (along with the other six virtues). One may still be guiltless if bad things happen, and one might still be sinful even if things go right. This is why the drunk driver that didn't hit the girl is still guilty (even if not punished) while a failed attempt to rescue someone in distress is still heroic (even if not lauded).

**vi) Dressing Room:** I have often said that the Thought Bubbles usually do teach valuable lessons, just not the ones they were supposed to teach. This one is unique. This Thought Bubble teaches us how to be deceitful. The big mistake here is assuming that just because the victim was not aware of being hurt, he wasn't hurt. He was hurt: his privacy was violated. The victim's ignorance does not make this fact go away. This brings up the matter of harm and wrongdoing. I agree that one can be harmed in natural ways like a coconut falling off a tree (hence, harm can take place without wrongdoing), but wrongdoing must always lead to harm. If it were otherwise, then it wouldn't be wrong. To make the "no harm no foul" argument is a form of deflection: one is hoping to distract the accuser of the facts by presenting something not relevant to the situation, and therefore start a separate line of thought advantageous to the accused.

**vii) Coconuts:** The coconut examples are all over the place. The coconut itself can never be guilty, as it has no free will. A thrower of a coconut is usually guilty of it hits someone, the only exception would be if the person hit did something to get in its way that was unexpected by the thrower. Even in the case where "bad aim" is the cause, the thrower is guilty of ignoring his limitations and placing another in danger. But sometimes guilt is shared, as someone standing too close to a legitimate target is guilty of recklessly endangering himself.

**viii) Responsibility:** I find the idea that "responsibility" and "culpability" are two different things, and that Negel is confusing them here. While I am not suggesting Negel is "wrong," I do think the vocabulary could be improved to help understand certain concepts. Throughout the examples in the video, a subtle message is given that people are not responsible for bad things happening to them. Like so many other examples in this series, while the lesson is technically "correct," it can and does lead to dangerous ideas in a broader sense.

One is culpable for things they can change, either by action or inaction. One is responsible for anything that happens under one's authority, regardless if they were culpable or not. Let us consider Hank's car's brake lines being cut without his knowledge. He is certainly not culpable for the car wreck, but as the driver of the car he is still responsible for it. By driving the car, he has tacitly taken responsibility for the car and the condition it is in. I am as guilty as anyone else for not checking for leaks every time I get in the car. But I accept that when I turn the car on, I am also saying that this car is safe enough to drive. So much of the divisive rhetoric found in the United States at the time of this writing (2021-2022) has its roots in confusing responsibility with culpability.

I also want to point out that, while it is indeed proper to reward behavior we want to see and to discourage behavior we don't want to see, we should not make the mistake that a moral code is simply what we want or don't want. I addressed the matter of "agreeability" in **Topic IV.D.4** with Superman and Lex Luthor, and won't I recreate it here. There needs to be a consistency that mere "agreeableness" can never provide.

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