

MORALITY IN THE LIGHT OF CIRCULAR REASONING

Religion assumes that God gives us free will for he loves us and wants us to use it wisely so we are responsible for misusing it not him. But this is assuming that he gives it to us out of love. A supernatural being might give it to us not because it cares but for some other reason. Free will cannot be a sound basis for moral thinking when morality gives you the right to think you don't know if you have it out of God's love or not. And you have the right to assume it is given for God is evil and knows it will overall be for the worse.

It seems that free will or free choice or being a free agent has no meaning or value or use or importance unless you are allowed to get the results or consequences of your actions. It is really all about being responsible. Responsible means seeing yourself as a cause who brings events about. So free will to steal is nothing unless it is possible you will be judged and sent to jail for it. Free will goes with the ideas of retribution and judgement. You want to declare free will and the right to hurt others to punish them as values for you please something in yourself that by doing so and feel you give your existence and your life (there is a difference!). It is vindictive to be willing to condemn others for the principle of doing so gives you some existential satisfaction.

So there is a contradiction in saying free will is given so that we can be moral. The end result is not morality but something that pretends to be.

Religious people can be found who compare evil to rust. The argument is that evil is the absence of a good that should be there same as rust is the absence of metal that should be intact. They say that this does not amount to saying evil is nothing or the same as nothing or should be treated as nothing even if it is something. They say it is not an illusion.

But notice how they define evil as a flaw. That is softening it. Instead of something objectively horrendous it becomes a mistake. If evil is not real then it is a mistake. Mistakes are good for trial and error is good.

They say evil is a flaw for two reasons:

1 It just is a flaw - that is obvious.

2 Because God is all good and all powerful and cannot make evil. Evil exists so it is not created or a thing. It is just a good that is not good enough. As God comes first that would be the only essential reason.

The notion that evil is not real or at least mainly not real turns it into an error and an error then is seen as an incomplete truth. So it is not all bad and could be more good than bad! Morality asks us to take the best and most kindly interpretation so it follows it ends up being useless for then we have to look for the good even in what serial killers of women do.

Morality defends and justifies itself. 1 and 1 being 2 needs no justification either. Justice is not equal to injustice just as 1 is not equal to 2. Morality presupposes mathematics.

Unconvinced? Let us ask a question.

Why should I be fair and respect my neighbour? It seems it is just right to do this. It is right because it is right.

Is that a circular argument?

What is wrong with such arguments? It is assuming the thing you need to show to be true and taking as if it is true. So a circular argument disguises assumptions and assertions as truth. They seek to destroy truth by posing as proof.

If it is a circular argument, we instinctively see that it is not in the league of "I have to be a teacher for my parents say so and they say so for they are right". Morality respects instinct up to a point so that matters too.

What about the consequences of moral-based circles?

Will a woman-hater be able to say, "Women are bad because I hate them and I hate them because they are bad"? Can all sorts of undesirables such as racists use the same kind of reasoning we are using to ground ethical principles such as justice and love and show they are true? Can they say, "I am right to hate or be racist or whatever because I just am"? On the face of it the answer is yes but it depends on the kind of circle. We see that "Justice is right just because it is right" is somehow

different from the circles specified. First of all, it is a circle that seeks to avoid causing pain. Second, it has a convincing power that the other circles lack. Third, even our woman-haters and racists accept that circle as fundamentally true and have those other circles in defiance of it. It is the circle that lies down there deep down.

Believers in God say that love and justice are just right for God decrees that they are. That circle is flawed for it is not needed. Why not just say justice and love are right for they just are? Not all vicious circles are equally terrible.

"How does God have authority to dictate right and wrong? He just has." That is what the morality argument from God is saying though it tries to obscure it. To keep asking why why why all the time can be a way of evading the issue. Here you end up with a why that just stops. If you are going to do that then why not just stop with the harm done? Why not say it has its own "authority" to declare itself bad? Why not just say it is just bad and that is all there is to say?

Those who want morality based on authority are denying:

That the bad results of an action make it bad or have anything to do with it.

That the fact that show yourself uncaring in doing the action is not the problem.

That the pain is not the main issue - the authority being flouted is!

Whatever is left after this may call itself morality but is not.

Morality is not just right and wrong. It is power and knowledge too. That is why any carelessness with trying to define it is so dangerous and unacceptable.

Christianity wants to give the illusion of freedom from the consequences of sin. The sin is supposedly more than just forgiven. It is blotted out and erased. In Catholicism, you save yourself from the natural damage done by your sin even after it is forgiven by using indulgences. These indulgences are essentially good luck charms. The reality is that if you cut your hand off in sin no indulgence fixes that. The sin blotted out makes no difference. What you have is the illusion is that the matter is not just in the past but is no more. In that light we see how vindictive it is to say that anybody goes to Hell.

We can undo a wrong in our minds but God cannot. We believe a wrong has been done but only God can KNOW it. That KNOWING will be with him forever. If holding on to the memory of some wrong that was done to you is a sign your forgiving is superficial and not real then God does not really forgive. The shocking thing about superficial forgiveness is that it is the most attractive form and does have huge benefits for it still means the person has moved on a lot from the pain. It is doubtful that anybody really forgives.

Morality is useless unless we forgive. In a world of no mercy, nobody will be left alive to worry about morality. But who says a person is right to forgive? Forgiveness in the Bible sense implies blotting out the evil. So in every sense you try to do what would be if the wrong had never been done. It no longer exists in a sense for you have pardoned it. Nobody really believes in being forgiving in that sense. As we will see, forgiveness is redefined as moving on.

Morality cannot give authority to forgive in the real sense. Morality does not forgive. People do. Forgiveness for them is not about being morally right to leave wrongs in the past. It is about moving on for you have to. Forgiveness is not about authority or even morality. It is about how we are forced to forgive a lot in order to be able to function in life at all. If we have to make a medicine to survive and it turns out it will benefit evil people the most we still have to make it though they deserve to be destroyed. Justice and what we need to do are two separate things. Morality is a thief for it steals the forgiveness horse or the moving on horse and rides on it. Forgiveness is what we mostly want morality to facilitate and command but it does not really do it. Thus attempts to base morality on the authority of a forgiving God are doomed to fail. God is by definition that which has the authority to remove sins and forgive them. God by definition then cannot exist and is a superstition. God by definition cannot be morality but offends morality by being a fake moral agent.

Morality presupposes that you have a duty to recognise that morality exists and then to recognise the further duties that comprise morality. If you say morality is nonsense you are saying it's a duty to call it nonsense. The realisation and the reality is that you cannot get away from treating duty as a fact. That is not about God and indeed is anti-God. It is no more about God than seeing that a stone is not alive. Bringing God in is flouting morality and mocking it.

Is morality morality or right for God says so or does even he have to agree with it for it is right no matter what he wants to think? If God makes things right by commanding them then he can make it holy to stone adulteresses to death. Morality becomes obedience and nothing else.

You can uphold traditional morality and still say that it is only morally valid or right because God commands it. It is

arbitrary in principle but you would never guess. A God who arbitrarily commands us never to hurt babies is still arbitrary. Arbitrary means the moral rules can change but they do not have to. For that reason, you never know if a religionist really believes in morality or not. You cannot necessarily tell from how they act. And as for their protestations, "I believe in objective morality," what if they think God has made it right for them to say that though they know it is not the case? Francis Beckwith says, "Like many classical Christians, I do not find the [divine command theory] (or its modified version defended by Adams) to be an adequate justification for moral law. But that does not mean that God is not the ground of the moral law. It simply means that it is not his commanding that gives the moral law its authority. . . . That is, God's commands are good, but not because God commands them, but because God is good."

This still makes the commands arbitrary. God is in control of all things so when he is in charge of the outcomes he can command something that seems unfair when you don't see the full picture. And if not all commands are arbitrary you don't know which are which.

God did not will the way he is. His nature is uncreated and even he did not make it. So what God is is logically prior to what God does. God can do nothing about what he is. His nature gives him his will and directs it. It may be his will but even his will is nothing compared to his nature. God may be personal but undirected brute fact gives him that personal nature. Something blind as it were does that for he did not make himself. Something blind bringing you into being and giving you a will means it is arbitrary and the sense that it is not is an illusion.

If the Christian doctrine that moral nature is the same as God's nature is true then morality then it does not arise only in how people relate to each other. In fact it would be more accurate to say it does not arise in the context of interpersonal relations at all. The idea is that God is good and just AND IT JUST HAPPENS that it works for people IF he makes people.

Ought implies can. This principle is essential to morality. A moral rule you cannot obey is not a moral rule at all. Does ought implies can get you from an is to an ought? Maybe for there is no ought without can. Can is the main ingredient. It is moral then not to start with right and wrong and rules but with can. So moral is based on what is not moral in itself. Thus morality does not need a moral God or a God of morality before it can exist.

A moral rule means you can understand why it is moral. You should understand. But you cannot understand why God decrees it as moral. So God ruins the link between can and ought. God not only fails to solve the problem but destroys the link.

Morality should be more provable or more convincing than God. To say there is no real right to wrong is as bad as saying that you cannot speak a word of English. As Paul Chamberlain says to speak the sentence is to refute it.

No matter what you do, you end up seeing justice and love and therefore morality as mere brute facts.