

MORALITY AS COMMUNICATION "YOU OUGHT TO, YOU OUGHT NOT TO"

Moral laws are a form of communication, an activity by which one mind through statements conveys meaning to another mind. For moral laws are found explicitly in imperatives (e.g., "One ought to keep one's promises") and commands (e.g., "Keep your promises") and, implicitly, in descriptions (e.g., "Keeping promises is good"). Quote from the New Mormon Challenge.

Morality is said to be a communication. Some say it is not but feels like one. And you may feel there is a moral law telling you to kill all the patients in your local nursing home. Some say it only communicates what you are conditioned to see as right or wrong. Others say it communicates what really is right and wrong. They say errors come in through bad information or being pressured but that is something else's fault and is not the fault of morality and the message it gives.

If you see morality as communication then why do you not necessarily feel that it is "watching" you? People are said to behave better when they think God is watching them but this does not happen with morality. Do you behave for you are too proud to be seen doing the bad thing? Is it fear of God? If God and morality are the same thing as in Christian philosophy then this is strange. It suggests we are conditioned to see morality as communication.

Psychologists may say that since morality is about fitting in the wider and bigger society this involves unspoken and spoken communication about what to do and not to do. That could explain where the perception that moral codes and rules are communicating with you comes from. These Psychologists would say, "We tell each other in some way not to do what is wrong and we never wait until the action happens before condemning it. We communicate beforehand that is it not on. We are merely sharing how morality itself communicates that it is wrong."

Disgust about certain actions such as sexual degeneration and stealing seems to be what we mean by communication. God then must show us his disgust by setting things up like that! Being good is an alternative to receiving disgust! Disgust in moral matters is driven by the sense that the evil in some sense could contaminate you. Its about keeping yourself clean. You feel damaged by seeing the evil in another as if seeds are potentially put in you to do the same. You know that there is contagion in evil.

The New Mormon Challenge: There is an incumbency to moral laws. As Gregory Koukl puts it, moral laws "have a force we can actually feel prior to any behavior. This is called the incumbency, the 'oughtness' of morality...It appeals to our will, compelling us to act in a certain way, though we may disregard its force and choose not to obey."

End of quote.

The New Mormon Challenge: When we break a significant and clear moral rule, it is usually accompanied by feelings of painful guilt and sometimes shame. For we are cognizant of our moral failure and realize that we deserve to be punished. Only sociopaths succeed in overcoming their conscience completely... moral laws are not material.

End of quote.

Morality is either about truth claims or it is not. Is it really fair to not pay x for her labour or is it just an opinion or useful fiction?

Morality has to be about truth or it is not morality at all but something that looks like it or can look like it. Morality is not about what you intend or want or need or think or reason is true. To say morality is opinion is just to call it a lie.

So morality is "out there" and we have to discover it and embrace it.

A rock kind of communicates that you cannot lift it. So morality being out there can be communicating in a way. Religious people go too far with the communication - its not personal communication.

Who is communicating? Nobody or anything reliable that is for sure! The communication is only a bit of help at best for you cannot really know all about any situation. So morality is hard to determine and practice. We can talk about justice easily but its very hard to get justice right.

Religion says God is communicating. For Mormons God is a creature. For Christians he is not. Both would agree however that God uses morality to communicate right and wrong to us. So God turns morality into a message.

Mormons undermine the Christian belief that morality is only morality for God decrees it and grounds it and in a way IS it.

The Christian God is not a creature in any sense but the absolute. The Mormon God is just a superhuman person and Christians say that no being just because it is good or powerful can be equated with morality. Suppose a god does claim to be morality? Why should we believe him? Why not believe somebody else? The being is just trying but failing to equate himself with morality. That is the sign of an arrogant tyrant.

So if morality is communication then it tells us justice and love is right and communicates a threat if we violate them or try to. There is pride and arrogance in saying you have got a communication about moral truth for the truth is no good unless you listen so you are bolstering up your ego by saying you listened and responded. Morality as communication is nothing to boast about and its only a charter for religious oppression. You even oppress yourself in the service of your ego.

DISPUTING MORALITY AS COMMUNICATION

The view that morality is personal communication in itself is odd. It suggests that morality has little or no value at all unless it is that kind of communication. The sceptic gets the message that if you sense no message then you don't need to be moral!

We might say that a God who commands, "You shall not commit adultery", is threatening and bullying for a command is not necessary and he should dialogue with us to help us avoid adultery. We are right. Religionists don't want to say that he is not commanding but it is morality saying it and he is only telling us what morality says for that makes morality the real God and so there is no real need for God if it will suffice. God is not God then.

How can communication be a part of morality? If flowering is communicating then that makes no sense for flowering is not communicating. A morality that is things it cannot be is spurious.

If morality is communication then if God is morality then it follows that you cannot be moral at all without faith in God. Why? Because to say don't steal communicates that stealing is not just opined to be wrong but is wrong. So to be told your duties to God means you are being told and communicated to that you are bad if you withhold your duties to him. You have more an excuse for saying stealing is not wrong than you have for not embracing and loving and believing in God.

The Christians assert that atheists can be moral without having any faith in God. The only problem is that they fail to see they should not take morality seriously unless there is a God. The argument is that the ethical atheist is using God and not realising it. Either Christians are just saying that to butter up atheists and to butter up society which hates religions who hate anybody or they do not understand that morality means communication. If moral rules do not communicate oughtness and they should then Christians have a lookalike morality not the real thing.

The New Mormon Challenge: "Remarkably the idea of deserving punishment has vanished from liberal infested America and Europe. If feeling we deserve punishment is innate then treating prisoners and criminals as subjects to be merely rehabilitated not punished is an act of degradation and violence against them and trying to turn them into functional sociopaths."

End of quote.

But we have seen that those who are dedicated to giving people what they deserve may be only pretending. And if they are people with a lookalike morality they are no different from those liberals!

Morality when it gives a message and threatens and tells you your dignity will go if you do x is clearly trying to force rather than teach. No wonder we bristle at morality and moral people. Morality is an attempt to force us but that we might manage to resist it. If morality tries to force then what room is there for rewarding those who live morally?

No reward is really a reward when it is the alternative to a threat. Its like getting a box of chocolates from an ogre. Morality is not communication of truth and threats.

SO?

Moral laws are not laws as such but truths. Laws do not come from God. If there were no God but nothing at all it would be law that seeds cannot grow. Nobody makes that law and yet it is there. Its not real but it is sort of real.

One ought to do what is morally right for its own sake even when no human person will ever know and no human person will ever be harmed.

Are these moral laws communicated or communicating? A tulip flowering is only flowering - it is not communicating. You have to impose a message on it but it is not its message.

The morality as communication stuff is just about creating a mystery around morality which is hoped to lead you to religion

and faith.

The New Mormon Challenge cites John Harris, "For a moral judgement to be respectable it must have something to say about just why a supposed wrong action is wrongful. If it fails to meet this test it is a preference and not a moral judgement at all."

It would be terrible to present a preference claim as objective morality for it is forcing and conditioning and punishing people over a lie and over what is not love or justice.

A moral ought needs a reason or it is not a moral ought. Religion seems to think that the need for a reason decrees that there is a moral ought. But a moral ought needing a reason does not mean there is one.

Anyway if there is an ought it does not give a toss about what we need or want or desire. It is not about that. This leads many to argue that morality that is not about us so it is superstition or at best unworkable.

The communication argument can be a coverup for why we cannot account for justice and love being morally good. You pretend morality justifies and testifies to itself.

Obviously saying that God knows its wrong and bans it is no help. It adds to the problem for instead of saying morality is just what we prefer to be right or wrong it insults God by saying he is the inventor!

If morality somehow commands even if we are not clear on what this means can it command on its own? Our experience says yes. If God commands it then is that another authority? How can he have the authority when morality can command itself. He cannot. If he could anyway then which authority comes first? Morality definitely.

Morality is not a command but seems to command. Reality is something we cannot change so morality is commanded by truth. This idea avoids us getting rebellious as we always do when we see something as a rule imposed on us.