



WHY SHOULD I BE MORAL?
PLATO

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- Meta-ethical positions

- Nihilism

- Absolutism

- Relativism

- Nihilists debate whether or not one can justify morality without appeal to religion

- Certain people believe that one must appeal to God to support moral beliefs

- Religious moralists argue that without God, life has no meaning and there is reason to be good or just

- Secular moralists claim that morality is independent from God and religion.

Pascal's Wager

- Blaise Pascal claimed that we do not need to have decisive proof of God's existence in order to adopt a religious morality
- Should we believe in God or not?
- We can act as if God exists, or we can act as if God does not exist
- Belief requires finite sacrifice for the infinite reward, while disbelief gets one finite rewards on the threat of infinite punishment
- According to the diagram, in the absence of knowing whether God does or does not exist, we should act as if he does since the benefits ultimately outweigh the costs

PASCAL'S WAGER		
	YOU'RE RIGHT!	YOU'RE WRONG!
BELIEF	ETERNAL JOY	NOTHING
ATHEISM	NOTHING	ETERNAL SUFFERING



- “Why should we be moral when it is our self-interest to be immoral?”
(Plato, 53)

- Egoism is a challenge to morality

- Two forms: Egoism Proper & Ethical Egoism

- Egoists admit that occasionally it is in our interest to be moral



ORIGIN OF JUSTICE

- “They say that to do wrong is naturally good, to be wronged is bad, but the suffering of injury so far exceeds in badness the good of inflicting it that when men have done wrong to each other and suffered it, and have had a taste of both, those who are unable to avoid the latter and practice the former decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to inflict injury nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants, and the law’s command they call lawful and just. This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice; it stands between the best and the worst, the best being to do wrong without paying the penalty and the worst to be wronged without the power of revenge...” (Plato, 55)

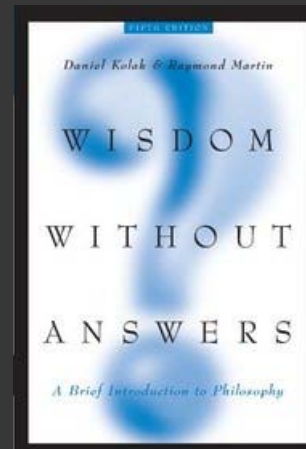
Morality or Self-Interest?

- The fear of God does not seem to work as a moral motivation because even religious people act immorally
- Respecting people out of fear of God is mere egoism, and not morality
- If we act morally out of fear of God, we are actually just acting in our self-interest, which is completely contrary because morality is supposed to oppose self-interest
- When we help some one merely for a reward we may not have acted morally. At least it is difficult to determine if some one acts morally when self-interest is involved



Moral Motivation

- Meta-ethical questions, such as “Why should I be moral? Should I sacrifice my self-interest for those of others?,” are the origin of the egoism problem
- Even religious moralists struggle with the egoism since most obey a moral law out of fear of eternal punishment, or desire for eternal reward
- Socrates divides all goods into these three classes:
 - Things that are simply gratifying (Diner Food)
 - Things that are both gratifying and rewarding (Working Out/Reading a Book)
 - Things which we have to do in order to avoid something (Paying Car Insurance)
- If just, or good, actions were of the first or second kinds, then there would be no problem of moral motivation



The Ring of Gyges Example

- Unlike Socrates' belief that justice is good in itself, Glaucon claims that justice is only a necessary evil
- Glaucon starts off his argument by raising the issue of the ring of Gyges
- Gyges was a shepherd that found a mysterious ring that allows anyone who possesses it to turn invisible
- After discovering the power that the ring holds, Gyges decides to murder the King of Lydia, commit adultery with the Queen, and ultimately rule the land
- As a result, Glaucon claims that if the just man was given the ring, there would not be a difference in behavior between the just and the unjust man
- The main goal of the just man is not to be just, but to appear just



The Socratic Solution

- Socrates rejects Glaucon's argument. His response is somewhat metaphysical
- Socrates argues that the soul is consists of three parts
- Justice is
 - Rational
 - Spirited
 - Appetitive/Passionate
- The just man is one whose three parts are balanced appropriately. The unjust man is ruled by appetites, instead of controlled by reason. This way, injustice is a kind of disease among the parts of the soul
- When one lies or steals, one makes enemies, and has to worry about being caught and revenge, whereas the just man can live at peace with himself
- In the end, Glaucon realizes that the unjust man will constantly be at war with himself, so he concedes to Socrates' argument

Derren Brown: Abandoned Wallet Trick

What do you think is the probability of a wallet that has been abandoned on a busy street to be stolen?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxYCh_p2Mjs&feature=related

Any reactions? Is it what you expected to see? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions

- Using the Ring of Gyges example, Do you agree more with Glaucon or Socrates? Why?
- Are morals objective or subjective?
- Reiterating Plato's words, "why should we be moral when it is our self-interest to be immoral?"

