

Phil:

At the God Unmuted Conference, you had a speaker claiming that compassion is a value that is borrowed from Christianity "morality".

Compassion is merely an emotion, is it not? Our emotions can generate value that, in turn, guide our behaviors. There is no moral system we need to invoke as a "foundation" of behavior if we simply act consistent with our emotions, right? This is not any system of morality but simply allowing our emotions to form values that drive our behaviors.

This is how I live. There is no obligation in living consistent with our emotions. There is no morality associated with it. Yet the speaker appears to be saying we all live based on some moral system. That's just not true, yet I see this claim constantly repeated by theists. Why is this false claim so persistent even in light of the many amoralists who make it clear they see no moral system.

(I am not troubled by the lack of an actual moral system. I've actually had some theists exclaim "then there are no immoral acts!" in response to my position as if I am doomed to act without compassion toward others.)

In addition, claiming that compassion is an essential part of Christian morality cannot be true since Jesus, if he actually is God, commanded grown Israelite soldiers to hack Amalekite infants to death. Had you refused to obey Jesus in this act, you would have been considered to be immoral, right? Christian morality is ultimately based on nothing but blind obedience, right? It is blind because there is no standard available to someone scrutinizing Gods prior to belief in any one of those Gods to assess the morality of those Gods. What theists refer to as "moral intuition" is always thrown out the window when they receive what they believe to be a divine command to do something akin to hacking infants into pieces, right?

Or is there an actual standard of morality that does not distill to mere obedience? And if it is mere obedience, why call it "morality"?

If you would like to set up a debate with an amoralist, I can recommend a few. But the claim everyone has some type of moral system has become quite tiresome. My position and the position of a great many, especially those in philosophy, is that all moral claims distill to either merely emotions or blind obedience. We may claim things are pragmatically wrong with respect to a particular goal, but never use "wrong" in a moral sense.

Justin:

I don't know if I've ever met an amoralist. I mean, you say you are an amoralist. But my suspicion is that you still invoke, you know, justice, you know, right and wrong, truth and falsity and so on, when it comes to your dealings with other people. So, I think...I'd see it...I'd find it very hard to see how you can be someone who doesn't in practice live with some kind of a moral code or moral system, you know, that you hold other people accountable to. And, you know, if it's true that there is no actual right or wrong, that you know, ultimately, we're only acting in accordance with our feelings, I guess the other question I have is **why you have a problem with Old Testament violence passages** if it's just people acting in accordance with their emotions, actually. You know, how can you criticize, you know, the morality of such a passage? But as a Christian, you know, obviously I do believe in real, actual moral right and wrong and, and therefore, I do think you need to distinguish carefully between those commands given in the Old Testament in particular warfare situations that may be an exception or override and otherwise universal principle. But of course, we've done a number of shows looking at that, but I guess ultimately, **I just don't see how a morality ultimately based on simply following emotions can be moral in a sense and I suppose you're not claiming it is moral**, it just is the way things are for you. But surely, the moral code of the West have inevitably shaped even the emotions you have that lead to compassion for outcasts and refugees, the vulnerable so on, and those weren't the instincts necessarily of other cultures in the past. I think that was Ben's point, in a sense that that compassion as a moral

This is testable. I have held to this position over 25 years and have lived it consistently. I have over 5,000 Facebook friends I have been regularly reacting with on this notion of morality and have written hundreds of thousands of words on theology, philosophy, and the notion of morality. You can explore for yourself whether I have ever invoked actual morality in my writings. Here is a good place to start:

<https://sufficientreasons.wordpress.com>

Your response here seems to be the go-to response among theists when I point out that many people like myself sincerely and consistently hold there is no actual morality. They simply refuse to believe it. I have a friend who tells me that no Christian actually believes in the resurrection. If they say they do, he simply does not believe they are sincere. It does allow the other side to avoid a direct confrontation with the claim. But I consider it to be lazy at best and dishonest in many cases. What can be done if someone tell you that you don't actually believe what you say you believe? What do you do if a non-believer says that they suspect your disbelief in the resurrection must be evidenced somewhere in your life in spite of your claims and walk away from a discussion with you? How would you respond?

Here are a couple more links to articles in which I lay out the moral arealist position:

- <https://strasked.wordpress.com/morality-and-god/>
- <https://strasked.wordpress.com/tag/morality/>

I hold that **justice** is simply an emotional stance. One person claims that it is unjust for people with the same needs not to receive the same resources while their neighbor claims it is unjust to receive resources when you don't work. Both of these claims of "justice" distill to emotion-derived values. Both sides will claim any violation of their particular notion of "justice" is "immoral", thus demonstrating the nonsensical notion that justice is coherently grounded in some form of morality. It is not. It is clearly emergent of emotions at the level of primitives.

There are two types of "**right and wrong**": alleged "moral right and wrong" which I hold does not exist, and "pragmatic right and wrongs" which are measured against goals. I see justification only for the latter type of "right and wrong". I see theists constantly equivocate between these two types of "right and wrong" when they claim I must admit that I believe [emotionally abhorrent action] is not "wrong". It is true that I hold there are not morally wrong actions, but only because I have yet to identify a legitimate moral realm in which moral wrongs can legitimately exist. Let me reiterate this: Moral right and wrong does not exist. The "morality" of theists distills to blind obedience among theists, and to raw emotions among subjective moralists. Why call obedience "morality"? Why call emotions "morality"?

Truth and falsity have nothing to do with morality if morality is how we ought to live. Truth can be uncovered through honest scientific exploration and is orthogonal to any moral system. I can believe in truth without ever invoking some moral system.

Whenever I introduce the illogic of a "loving" God unlovingly asking grown men to hack infants into pieces, I frequently encounter theists who are sure I am introducing some type of moral argument. We would very quickly call the neighbor man who claim to love his children whom he unnecessarily in the basement a "liar" due to the logical incoherence of a loving entity acting unlovingly toward those he claims to love. There is no need to invoke morality here. This is not a moral argument. This is a logical argument. I am not sure what makes this argument seem like a moral argument in the minds of theists other than the apparently easy excuse to dismiss all such "moral" criticisms made by someone who has no moral foundation to work from. But why do you suppose theists keep claiming this is a moral argument in spite my clear explanation of the logical incoherency in the account?

instinct is something that Christianity is handed to the west. And, you know, if morality does just boil down to following emotions, **what do you say to the abuser, the school shooter whoever who's just following their emotions when they go on a rampage?** [indecipherable] don't see that there is some kind of a moral duty, moral obligations that exist and that should be levied at people in that sense, but maybe we do need a debate on this. Always interested in your thoughts and this idea of amorality is an interesting one. Thank you.

Yes, it would be nice to have a debate on this. I have one amoralist friend in mind who can quite clearly articulate the position. Let me know if you'd like me to contact him.

That's correct. We all hold that emotions exist. Emotions are well-substantiated. However, to claim that there is an objective morality accessible to all humans requires an observable convergence of moral dispositions, something we do not even remotely see. Any alleged convergence of "objective moral facts" is far better explained by converging emotions among humans sharing similar neurologies.

You wanted to invoke notions of "justice" as moral notions. Yet look at the vastly disparate notions of justices proposed today. You'll have to admit that this strongly suggests the absence of any objective moral intuition that God has given humanity to guide their behavior. At the same time, you'll need to acknowledge that the commands of God in the Bible do not follow what any "moral intuition" would demand. In fact, you and I would have been considered "immoral" had we intervened and protected and adopted those Amalekite infants. It is well past time to stop claiming our "moral intuitions" demonstrate there is an objective morality. What God wants is raw obedience. Raw obedience does not constitute any coherent notion of morality. It remains raw obedience without any way to assess the moral worthiness (if any) of the God making the demands.

That's the proper question theists should be asking amoralists. They need to stop claiming amoralists actually do, somehow, in some way, believe in morality.

I value children. I have three of my own children. If I saw an Israelite soldier hacking a child into pieces I would intervene. I have intervened dozens of times to protect strangers, not to fulfill some type of moral obligation, but simply because of my natural compassion. This compassion is innate to my humanity and was not introduced by some religion as an emotion forward to my godless humanity. I don't need a God to be compassionate, and for you to claim Christianity introduced compassion to the world when the non-Christian world has been there for you to easily scrutinize is just foolish. Explore other cultures. Note the compassion. Explore history. Can you find the lack of compassion in non-Christian cultures to any degree less than the theocratic culture of the Hebrews in which they were to stone disobedient children and slaughter non-Israelite children?

I have emotions. I have compassion. I would stand between a gunman and school children, not out of moral obligation, but due to my raw compassion for children. I deeply abhor those who harm children. That is not a moral statement. That is an emotional statement. And the lack of any legitimate moral system does nothing to compel me to dishonestly invent a moral system. I criticize secular notions of morality as strongly as I critique the absurdity of a Christian morality that distills to raw obedience. Secularists also often try to claim I must, somehow, in some way, hold to some moral code. I don't.

Are you ready to believe me when I say I have yet to find a coherent notion of objective morality? Or will you continue to claim, contrary to my explicit statements, that I must somehow hold to something beyond my emotions to determine what actions I should take?

I find compassion best accomplishes happiness for me. I enjoy being compassionate. It is not a moral obligation to act compassionately. I simply act compassionately as the best way to become a happy and fulfilled human. A cultivation of compassion is all that is necessary for humans to act in a productive way toward each other. Let's rid ourselves of this silly notion that we need some moral code before we can treat others well.