The Morals of the Ten Commandments

Proposal

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4A

Paper Outline

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Introduction

Should the universal morals, like the ones behind the Ten Commandments, apply to everyone? It is fitting to know what you yourself think is right, but do your morals match with the ones behind the Ten Commandments? Does it even matter if they match? The issue of different opinions on the good and bad in this world is growing. It is significant to know this because not everyone has the same ethics and most people would like to know what we should and should not do. Researchers wonder if we should all follow the ideas behind the Ten Commandments or if we should instead make our own personal morals and ignore the Commandments’. Knowing if there is a set “right” and set “wrong” is important in living our lives.

Literature Review

“Vengeance Is Ours” is a paper written by Jared Diamond. The issue of what is good in this world is laid out. He explores this by telling the reader a story about his friend getting revenge on his uncle’s murderer. The difference in this story is that this is the norm for where Daniel lives. To kill in New Guinea is like to go to work in the United States. This is why it’s viewed there as ordinary. Jared talks about the hate that Americans have too. Americans are taught to love all throughout their lives but right when war strikes, we are taught to hate the enemy. We feel badly after this, unlike Daniel and his tribes who hate and don’t regret. Their morals are different than ours because we do not grow up in the same ways as each other. Our culture is a factor. [[1]](#endnote-1)

In the article “What Makes Us Moral” by Jeffrey Kluger, a metaphor is given about a child. If a child in preschool is told not to eat in class by his teacher, he will not eat in class because his teacher says he shouldn’t. If she changes her mind and tells the child he can now eat in class, he will happily agree. On the other hand, if the teacher tells a preschooler to push a child out of his seat, the boy will refuse and say that the teacher shouldn’t say that. The writing states, “The deepest foundation on which morality is built is the phenomenon of empathy, the understanding that what hurts me would feel the same way to you. And human ego notwithstanding, it's a quality other species share.” This article also talks about the banishment of people who won’t follow the rules and who aren’t part of a group. People are more likely to help people in their own areas than in foreign areas. Events like the ones in Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia have abused the sense of tribalism to kill people of other races/nationalities. “Religious believers as diverse as Roman Catholics, Mennonites and Jehovah's Witnesses have practiced their own forms of shunning—though the banishments may go by names like excommunication or disfellowshipping. Clubs, social groups and fraternities expel undesirable members, and the U.S. military retains the threat of discharge as a disciplinary tool, even grading the punishment as "other than honorable" or "dishonorable," darkening the mark a former service person must carry for life.” This shows that everyone shuns. People think that others aren’t right if they don’t fit in with them, or maybe it is that they don’t want to be changed by them. Furthermore, it could mean the group doesn’t want to look corrupt. This exemplifies that religious groups still do bad things according to the universal moral code. The article also talks about parts of the brain that deal with bad and consequences. “Using a switch to divert the train toward one person instead of five increases activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex—the place where cool, utilitarian choices are made. Complicate things with the idea of pushing the innocent victim, and the medial frontal cortex—an area associated with emotion—lights up. As these two regions do battle, we may make irrational decisions. In a recent survey, 85% of subjects who were asked about the trolley scenarios said they would not push the innocent man onto the tracks—even though they knew they had just sent five people to their hypothetical death. "What's going on in our heads?" asks Joshua Greene, an assistant professor of psychology at Harvard University. "Why do we say it's O.K. to trade one life for five in one case and not others?" [[2]](#endnote-2)

In the article “Scientists discover moral compass in the brain which can be controlled by magnets” by David Derbyshire, an experiment is discussed about conducted it on humans when a certain part of their brain was being controlled by a magnet. By letting the magnets disturb the part of the brain called the right temporo-parietal junction behind the right ear through transcranial magnetic stimulation, the scientists saw very interesting effects. People thought scenarios they were given were moral even if someone did something bad but in the end there was a happy ending. The questions that I come up with is “Who put this in our brains?” and “Why are they in our brains?” [[3]](#endnote-3)

Steve Connor talks in the article “Belief and the brain’s ‘God spot’” about not one, but many spots in the human brain that may control religion. Through different experiments and studies, scientists found that when disrupting certain parts of the brain, the person’s religion changes and one change is that it can get more intense. One person who was doing Buddhist meditation during an experiment claimed to reach nirvana. Another person’s experience is explained by the author: “…scientists tried to stimulate the temporal lobes with a rotating magnetic field produced by a "God helmet". Michael Persinger, from Laurentian University in Ontario, found that he could artificially create the experience of religious feelings – the helmet's wearer reports being in the presence of a spirit or having a profound feeling of cosmic bliss.” Scientists now ask themselves if religious belief came to be for comfort for humans and also if religion is biological. Maybe these parts are out in our brains for the reason of being able to know religion. [[4]](#endnote-4)

Paul Bloom is a psychology professor at Yale and is the writer of “The Moral Life of Babies”. This article is one that explains to the reader why the author thinks people don’t learn morality but are born with it. With a test where researchers record how much time a baby looks at something, (usually the things they look at longer at interesting or surprising), people have found out the following: “Like adults, babies tend to linger on such scenes — they look longer at them than at scenes that are identical in all regards except that they don’t violate physical laws. This suggests that babies have expectations about how objects should behave. A vast body of research now suggests that — contrary to what was taught for decades to legions of psychology undergraduates — babies think of objects largely as adults do, as connected masses that move as units, that are solid and subject to gravity and that move in continuous paths through space and time.” With experiments held through the years, like seeing if babies will help people in need even if it takes time and energy, the results have come out that they will help. It seems like children at ages even younger than 1 year old have morals. If someone is trying to open a cabinet with their hands full, the baby will try and help. Paul quotes David Hume, saying that “…mere rationality can’t be the foundation of morality, since our most basic desires are neither rational nor irrational…” Also, the writers says, “’Tis not contrary to reason,” he wrote, “to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.” To have a genuinely moral system, in other words, some things first have to matter, and what we see in babies is the development of mattering. A puppet show was given to babies about a circle trying to go up a mountain. He was having difficulty so another shape came and helped him up the mountain. Then in another scenario with the circle going up the mountain, another shape pushed the struggling circle down the mountain. After the puppet show, people gave the “good” and “bad” guys to the babies and saw which one was picked up (the one they wanted and liked). The one picked up was the “good” guy. We don’t know if this is because one is good and one is bad but it shows an overwhelming result that definitely shows something. Part of “good” might be what you want done to yourself. [[5]](#endnote-5)

“Buddha and Buddhism” written by Dale Saunders talks about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. “1) morality (shila), which includes right speech, right conduct, and right livelihood; 2) mental discipline (samadhi), which includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration; 3) intuitive insight or wisdom (prajna), which includes right views and intentions.” This shows that Buddhists are supposed to do what we usually think is “universally good” by not lying etc. Why though? What makes those so important and why do they think those are the morals to go by? This article also states that karma is when someone does something either good or bad and they get the same (good or bad) response. No one makes it happen; it just happens. No one judges the morals behind it so this is based on universal morals. Buddhism goes off of this. [[6]](#endnote-6)

The article “Hinduism” by Norman Brown talks about the religion of Hinduism. Hinduism has ethics with universal morals like “almsgiving, the undertaking of vows and pilgrimages…religious bathing, reverencing the Brahmans, and feeding the poor.” Also, Ahinsa is saying not to kill humans or animals. Their thinking of morals is universal and in addition, it is based on their religion. It is good to partake in religious gatherings, as what is good in most other religions. I found out here that “good” is somewhat based on a person’s religion because different religions have ways of worship, who to worship, and why. [[7]](#endnote-7)

Charles Sheedy wrote “Ten Commandments”, an article stating the Ten Commandments and the purpose for them. He shares that the Commandments are a little varied between the Jewish and the Christian faiths. These are for Lutheran Christians and Catholic Christians: “I. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image; you shall not bow down to them or serve them (vs. 6, 7, 8a, 9). II. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (vs. 11a). III. Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy (vs. 12a). IV. Honor your father and your mother (vs. 16). V. You shall not kill (vs. 17). VI. Neither shall you commit adultery (vs. 18). VII. Neither shall you steal (vs. 19). VIII. Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor (vs. 20). IX. Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife (vs. 21). X. You shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or anything that is your neighbor's (vs. 21).” The Commandments are found both in the book of Exodus and the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible. This article also states that the commandments are a covenant from God sent through Moses. The covenant is for everyone. [[8]](#endnote-8)

In the article named “What’s a Good SAT Score or ACT Score?” by an anonymous author, a concept is explained that can relate to my project. The answer that this author is giving to the reader implies that there is no one “good” SAT or ACT score. It all depends on the college you will apply to and your usual standards and abilities. If someone got an SAT score of 1600 and the college they are trying to get into only accepts students with a score of 1700 or more, then this is a bad SAT score based on the college. “Good” and “bad” are based on circumstances, the past, and the person. It is different for each person. [[9]](#endnote-9)

The article “Chinese Workers Pay for Wal-Mart’s Low Prices” by Peter S. Goodman and Philip P. Pan says that in China, the people make most of Wal-Marts products. US companies go to China to get the people to make goods because their pay is lower than our pay; therefore, the companies don’t have to pay as much as if they would have to pay us if we were working for their companies. The Chinese people think that the working conditions are less evil than if the US people were working in the conditions. The working conditions there are not too bad according to the Chinese but if it were in the United States, the conditions would be viewed as horrible. This is because Chinese people have different lifestyles than us and they have different perspectives. This article relates to my project because the Chinese “good” is different than the US “good”, so there are different definitions because we are different people coming from different ways. [[10]](#endnote-10)

Research Design

The key concept of my research paper is going through different examples and doing trial and error to see if the morals of the Ten Commandments should apply to everyone. A hypothesis that I hold now is that whoever created humans beings knows the answer to what we should do and the way the find the answer to this is to look into who exactly made us. Religions usually hold this answer and many religions believe that they know who formed us. Who really did create us? Is it possible to find this out as we are only human? My research paper should first state what the morals behind the Ten Commandments are and the history of it and then throughout the paper, different examples of situations will be found and the definition of what good is will be near the end to find the answer to the question. The design will contain many concepts about religion, real-life experiences, and science. Metaphors will be explained to assure that the reader understands the information and proposals that I will set forth. The limitation of this study is that we don’t know for sure who created us (The cause-effect theory shows us that we had to be created from someone/something) so we do not know the answer according to our Creator. Even though we might not know the answer, who ever created us will give us clues and hints of how we are to live and this is where my paper comes in.

Action

My action for the project is my involvement in a local mission trip. This will be an internship for forty hours in all. It will help citizens of the United States with tasks that they may not be able to do but I am. I also want to raise money for the Prison Ministry for the Diocese of Richmond. I may also want to raise materials such as rosaries, Bibles, and motivational books. Because of one result that I have found dealing with the moral of treating other’s as you want to be treated, this has become the main driving force behind the mission trip. To be good is to make others feel good because that is what you yourself would want, so participating in a mission trip fits that very well. Helping others will give me a rush of enjoyment and I will know because of previous mission trips that giving others help is good to do. The mission trip will benefit the community as well because they will receive me as a helper and when they say thank you at the end of the day, they may have gotten a glimpse of why people should help others. Besides this, I will also make their life easier by giving them a helping hand. The fundraiser will help others to find what is good.

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