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Etika i religija

Sažetak

Cilj rada je prikazati povezanost religije i morala u svjetlu njihovih različitih svrha. Premda za mnoge ljude religijska uvjerenja predstavljaju dodatni motiv koji pridonosi poštovanju moralnih razloga, referat istražuje je li moral logički ili epistemološki ovisan o religiji. Budući da je konstituiranje istinskoga znanja ponekad suprotno mišljenju i uvjerenju, kriterij znanja nije svediv na konstituiranje uvjerenja. Oba polja mogu biti međusobno povezana i međusobno se obogaćivati ali u slučajevima kad nema dokaza ili su postojeći dokazi nedostatni za stupanj uvjerenja koji im se pridaje, religija postaje načinom komuniciranja koji ne zahtijeva istu vrstu složenih procedura za otkrivanje besmisla i izbjegavanje indoktrinacije. Svrha kojom je etika definirana sastoji se u produbljivanju moralnoga razumijevanja i u doprinosu moralnome razvoju s pomoću jačanja sposobnosti osobe da bude moralno autonomna. To je osobito važno u slučajevima kad ljudi podsvjesno prihvaćaju društveni konsenzus o stvarima koje su proglašene nemoralnima i stoga su zabranjene unatoč činjenici što njihove prosudbe prosudbe mogu biti pogrešne. Moralni razlozi nas na svoj način obvezuju ne zato što ih Bog naređuje, nego zato što bi ih Bog odobrio jer opravdavaju božanske naredbe.

Ključne riječi: krepost ili svetost, prisila, moralni razlog, opravdanje, znanje nasuprot uvjerenju.

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Ethics and Religion

Summary

The paper aims to present the relationship of religion to morality in virtue of their distinctive purposes. Although for many people religious beliefs provide additional supportive motives for responding to moral reasons, the paper investigates whether morality is logically or epistemologically dependent on religion. Since the constitution of genuine knowledge is sometimes opposed to opinion and belief, the criterion for knowledge is not reducible to the constitution of belief. Both fields might be interrelated and mutually enriching, thus in cases when evidence is absent or insufficient for the degree of belief accredited to it religion appears to be the mode of communication that does not require the same sort of complex procedures to detect nonsense and avoid indoctrination. The defining purpose of ethics is to deepen moral understanding and contribute to moral development by strengthening person's capacities for moral autonomy. It is particularly important in cases when people subconsciously adopt a social consensus about matters that are labeled immoral and thus prohibited in spite of the fact that their specific judgments are mistaken. Moral reasons make their own distinctive appeal to us not because God commands them, yet because God would approve them as they justify divine commands.

Key words: piety or holiness, coercion, moral reason, justification, knowledge versus belief

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Introduction

This paper aims to challenge the commonsense view that religion is the only source that can give morality a purpose. If moral truth is attainable by inferring the difference between right and wrong actions then there is the possibility of moral progress regardless of the historical version of emotional commitment to God. The point is that the evaluative approach to the issue is not dependent upon the descriptive approach (yet, the descriptive approach is better founded if good judgment is implied). As the terms of intrinsic good and instrumental good are suitable to be applied correctly only in the more obvious instances, the evaluative level of thinking ought to be clearly distinguished from the descriptive level. The dispute on standards and principles of morality is important not only for the sake of identification of moral truth but also for the sake of distinguishing moral truth from violence.

Methodological Approach

The relation of religion to morality consists of the debate whether morality is logically or epistemologically dependent on religion. James Rachels¹ proposed that in popular thinking, morality and religion are inseparable: people commonly believe that morality can be understood only in the context of religion. If good is simply equated with the will of God, human conduct will be made even more puzzled than it is, since the responsibility of the agent will be reduced.

Even for the religious people the precise relation of religion to morality is not always clear. Some definitions of the relationship between religion and morality are inclusive, others are disputed within the frame of rigorous philosophical standards and procedures. In philosophy, knowledge is equated with characteristics that are lacking in opinion or belief.

¹ Rachels, J. (1986): *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Random House, New York, pg. 40

As referred by many experts², the main epistemological questions pertain to establishing the criterion and ground for the sources of knowledge. That what constitutes genuine knowledge is commonly opposed to opinion or belief. Knowledge is contrasted with ignorance, absolutely certain knowledge is opposed to probable knowledge, and knowledge that is significant and informative is opposed to the knowledge that is trivial.

Within the quest for correct method of thinking in religious matters, Plato presents a sort of scientific justification for his attempt to define piety or holiness. In the view of Sher³ this topic is very important because many believe that God is the source of moral principles. But, in Plato's view moral principles have its origin in the autonomous agent himself. In his dialog of Euthyphro, Socrates poses the basic question on the issue⁴: *Is that which is holy loved by gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?* Obviously, the answer is to be found within the distinction between moral perfection and religious affiliation. In discussing causes and effects, the first part of the sentence suggests a descriptive approach in which only effects are viewed, and the second part suggests the evaluative approach put on the side of gods in which causes and effects are clearly distinguished. Namely, descriptive statements do not entail evaluative statements, while evaluative statements entail both, descriptive and evaluative. That is, evaluative statements are not reducible to religious statements, although they can encompass both.

Some famous Christian thinkers like William of Ockham⁵ consider that rightness simply means, or is equivalent to: commanded by God. In contrast, Aquinas⁶ held that God commands certain actions

² *Philosophy - Contemporary Perspectives on Perennial Issues*, Fourth Edition, Edited by E. D. Klemke, A. David Kline, Robert Hollinger, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994, pg. 13

³ George Sher: *Moral Philosophy - Selected Readings*, University of Vermont, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, San Diego, 1987, pg. 355

⁴ Plato: *Euthyphro - Apology - Crito - Phaedo - Phaedrus*, Translated by Harold North Fowler, The Loeb Classical Library founded by James Loeb 1911, Edited by Jefferey Henderson editor emeritus G. P. Goold, Introduction by W. R. M. Lamb, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, pg. 35 (10 a)

⁵ *Religion and Morality - A Collection of Essays*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973, pg. 1

⁶ *Religion and Morality - A Collection of Essays*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973, pg. 12

because they are right - right in a sense independent of the fact of God's having commanded them.

Immanuel Kant⁷ would not reason differently since he assumes that we have even the conception of God as the supreme good just from the idea of moral perfection. He proposed that even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with the ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such.

For example, rape is immoral not only because God forbids it, but because it is wrong in itself. Rape would be immoral even in the absence of God or if there were no God.

In Plato's dialog of *Euthyphro*, the part of the right which has to do with attention to the gods constitutes *piety and holiness*, and the remaining part of the right is that which has to do with the service of men.⁸ In his talk to Euthyphro Socrates⁹ has defined the attention to the gods as *a science of giving and asking*. Obviously, for Plato, religion is a sort of communication or a kind of interaction that does not "cover" the remaining part of the right which has to do with the service of men. At this point the root for the autonomy of morality has been established. But if religion is understood in an authoritarian form of theism, according to Donald Evans¹⁰, a break away from it is necessary for agent's moral freedom.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (From: Andrew G. Oldenquist: *Moral Philosophy - Text and Readings*, Second Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1978), pg. 212

⁸ Plato: *Euthyphro - Apology - Crito - Phaedo - Phaedrus*, Translated by Harold North Fowler, The Loeb Classical Library founded by James Loeb 1911, Edited by Jefferey Henderson editor emeritus G. P. Goold, Introduction by W. R. M. Lamb, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, pg. 47 (12 e)

⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 55 (14 d)

¹⁰ Donald Evans: *Does Religious Faith Conflict with Moral Freedom?* (From: *Religion and Morality - A Collection of Essays*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973), pg. 349

Reasons and Effects

In the Rachel's¹¹ view one of the most famous questions in the entire history of philosophy is the Socrates question from the earlier indicated dialog Euthyphro: whether *conduct is right because gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right?*

As moral reasons are obviously compelling independently from any particular religious belief, Martin¹² states that right acts are not right because God commands them, but because God sees them morally right. That is, instead of imposing his convictions, God rather recognizes and appreciates moral reasons as warranting divine commands.

In his *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant¹³ refers to his predecessors who failed to discover the principle of morality because they looked outside of the human will for the source of duty and obligation, whereas duty and obligation arise exactly from the human capacity for self-government. Duty and obligation are not something we find in the world, we rather impose them to the world by the use of valid reasoning – for instance when we infer that every single act of nonreversible behavior might be morally wrong.

Active and Passive Prospective

A man or a woman is a rational being and “a rational being belongs as a *member* to the kingdom of ends when he gives universal laws”. So, the moral reason is the deductive moral inference and unless moral truth can be identified by moral reason, moral conflicts would simply reveal a variety of disagreements with different unverifiable

¹¹ James Rachels: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Random House, New York, 1986, pg. 42

¹² Mike W. Martin: *Everyday Morality – An Introduction to Applied Ethics*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1988, pg. 11 - 12

¹³ Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited by Mary Gregor, Introduction by Christine M. Korsgaard, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, pg. 40 – 41 (4:432 – 4:434)

beliefs. Therefore reasoning about how to act has to show whether the transaction between the two sides has been resolved referring to what is right, or referring to what is might.

Reiman¹⁴ also approves the stand that our natural rational capacity to recognize how right must be different from might, leads us to the discovery that reason requires us to refrain from subjugating one another.

In the view of many experts reason and violence do not correlate but exclude each other. For instance Edgley¹⁵ proposed to say little about violence and more about reason. In his view the part of the ideology of liberal intellectuals is to show that violence has to be rejected, and the part of a romantic ideology is to show that reason is to be rejected. The common misconception of reason in the dispute occurs at the level of the question whether is it better to leave everything as it is, and let each side to merely insist on its own version of making sense to act in conformity with their own convictions. But reason requires discussion, and getting nearer to a true understanding instead. And, the moral reason requires victims to be protected because this fact is implied in the reversible behavior. True understanding of violence refers to coercion, which has no legitimate excuse whenever executed without regard for justice, kindness and love. One's own good, either physical or moral, if separated from values of justice and humanity is morally unacceptable, and therefore it is not a sufficient warrant for coercion. A better alternative is always available and the only valid principle of interference within an individual's "autonomy" to inflict violence whether to himself or to others, is the duty to protect the third party¹⁶. Yet, to the admirer of violence it is perfectly reasonable to execute violence toward others, regardless of his or her religious affiliation.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Reiman: *Justice and Modern Moral Philosophy*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990, pg. 17

¹⁵ Roy Edgley: *Reason and Violence*. A Fragment of Ideology of Liberal Intellectuals (From: *Practical Reason*, Edited by Stephan Körner (Contributors: G. E. M. Anscombe, Roderic Chisholm, Roy Edgley, G. R. Grice, R. M. Hare, Jaakko Hintikka, J. L. Mackie, Anthony Manser, D. E. Milligan, Anselm Winfried Müller, J. Raz, M. J. Scott-Taggart, Amartya Sen, W. H. Walsh, J. W. N. Watkins), Oxford – Basil Blackwell, 1974), pg. 113

¹⁶ The **third party** involves any virtual agent who might be suffering deprivation, as stated by: Tom L. Beauchamp & Laurence B. McCullough: *Medical Ethics – The Moral Responsibilities of Physicians*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1984, pg. 86

Religious Communication

If the commitment between God and men would rely upon conformity of men only, there will be no freedom. In that case, apart from the divine command, no rightness or truthfulness would exist. Accordingly, God could also have given the contrary commands, different from those we hold authentic. Obviously, religion does not face the same sort of challenge, like philosophy does; it rather communicates in a mode presented by Kupfer¹⁷, who assumes that religious belief is better expressed artistically than argued for, rationally. Religion provides us with vision and presents the way of seeing the world. On the other hand, philosophy seeks not only information, but rather criterion of knowledge as related to the problem of the sources and grounds of knowledge. Ilana Pardes¹⁸ illustrated the difference in two approaches to the same topic: in the biblical saga of God who created man in his image ... male and female as He created them. In the Yahwistic patriarchal religious tradition woman is presented as a God's mere afterthought. The only reason for her advent being the solitude of man. **The religious saga suggests that the woman's status has been inferior to the man's. The philosophical approach to the same saga tells just the opposite: Pardes presents it within the explanation of the metaphor: „bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh“** which speak of unity, solidarity, mutuality, and equality, saying the man should not conceptualize himself as either prior to, or superior to the woman. Pardes claims that the first woman, in her conversation to the serpent reveals an intelligent, perceptive, and informed agent who, unlike her passive partner, is familiar with the divine command and doesn't hesitate to reflect on it. Her decision to eat of the fruit of knowledge is accordingly seen as a courageous act which above all reflects her quest for knowledge.

¹⁷ Joseph Kupfer: *The Art of Religious Communication* (From: *Philosophy - Contemporary Perspectives on Perennial Issues*, Fourth Edition, Edited by E. D. Klemke, A. David Kline, Robert Hollinger, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994), pg. 310 - 311

¹⁸ Ilana Pardes: *Countertraditions in the Bible - A Feminist Approach*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992, pg. 15 - 24

In this respect, Hare¹⁹ views ethics as accurate as mathematics because both, mathematics and ethics do something absolutely and purely formal. They explain to us the logical properties of the words in question, which are implicit in their meanings and thus show us how to avoid inconsistencies in their use. And, the way these helps to settle arguments in both fields is the same.

On this behalf, Frankena²⁰ considers that if morality (and hence politics) is dependent on religion, then we cannot hope to solve our problems because we must look to religion as a basis for any answer to any personal or social problem. Those who believe that religion and morality are intertwined typically do not make clear in what sense they hold morality to be dependent on religion, and how the specific definition of morality and religion differ. In this respect Taylor²¹ assumes, *faith is not reason, else religion would be, along with logic and metaphysics a part of philosophy, which it assuredly is not.*

Frankena does not deal with the question whether morality is dependent on religion in all its forms (such as causal, historical, motivational, or psychological); he concentrates only in one form, that is, the claim that morality is *logically* dependent on religion. He points out²² that, when one agrees to use “right” to denote “commanded by God”, one in fact offers a belief as part of the justification, which is a fallacy. A belief can be regarded justified support of an ethical claim only if it can be shown that it is logically entailed by some basic appeal of man and the universe.

In support of the former opinion Rachels²³ refers to the famous remark from the Leibniz’s *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686) highlighting the basic assumption that is very clearly saying: *if things are not good by any rule*

¹⁹ Richard M. Hare: *Language and Moral Education* (From: Langford, Glenn & O'Connor D. J. (editors): *New Essays in the Philosophy of Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1973), pg. 152

²⁰ William K. Frankena: *Is Morality Logically dependent on Religion (Religion and Morality – A Collection of Essays*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973), pg. 295

²¹ Richard Taylor: *Faith and Reason* (From: *Philosophy - Contemporary Perspectives on Perennial Issues*, Fourth Edition, Edited by E. D. Klemke, A. David Kline, Robert Hollinger, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1994), pg. 353

²² William K. Frankena: *Is Morality Logically dependent on Religion (Religion and Morality – A Collection of Essays*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973), pg. 303 - 304

²³ James Rachels: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Random House, New York, 1986, pg. 43

of goodness but only by the will of God, why praise him for what he has done if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing exactly the contrary? If moral reasons are inferred as *a priori* framed by reason and left to be recognized by the free will, the trap will vanish.

Philosophical Approach

The production and application of *a priori* concepts is identified in the Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as the manifestation of intellectual "spontaneity". For Kant, the senses are passive but the intellect is spontaneous. Therefore Walsh²⁴ assumes, if morality rested on feelings, moral considerations would be entirely a matter of accident. Ethical judgments do not imply the existence of any feelings to be a necessary and sufficient condition for their validity, because the job of evaluative statements is not only to express emotions, but to praise or condemn.

Lawrence Kohlberg's²⁵ rightfully assumes, the words *moral*, *positive*, and *values*, still are very often interpreted by each teacher in a different way, depending on the teacher's own values and standards. But the beliefs must be rational and morally justified in order to be called objectively justified! Yet, if the value words were really relative or arbitrary, then challenge to stereotypes, irrationality, ignorance, prejudice, fixation of belief, and fanaticism would not be possible. Accordingly, an individual would be deprived from his human right to act autonomously, and would be prevented from exerting his unique human responsibility. Such sort of deprivation can be qualified as immoral and illegitimate, since it denies civil liberties to arouse independent judgment.

²⁴ W. H. Walsh: Kant's Concept of Practical Reason (From: *Practical Reason*, Edited by Stephan Körner (Contributors: G. E. M. Anscombe, Roderic Chisholm, Roy Edgley, G. R. Grice, R. M. Hare, Jaakko Hintikka, J. L. Mackie, Anthony Manser, D. E. Milligan, Anselm Winfried Müller, J. Raz, M. J. Scott-Taggart, Amartya Sen, W. H. Walsh, J. W. N. Watkins), Oxford – Basil Blackwell, 1974), pg. 196

²⁵ Lawrence Kohlberg: *Indoctrination Versus Relativity in Value Education* (From: George Sher: *Moral Philosophy – Selected Readings*, University of Vermont, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, San Diego, 1987) pg. 85

Indoctrination as a Threat

The habit of imposing didacticism is linked to the teacher's authority, which is typical in the hierarchical social order. It overrides the principle of moral equality for all men and instills obedience, instead. Its psychological aspect affects the autonomy of a person (as a rational being) in the very specific sense: any shift in the agent's habits, results in his or her feelings of overwhelming guilt. Yet, to impose guilt means to interfere with autonomy of another person. This sort of subjugation typically results in lowering integrity of a victim. If alternative option of *rights based processes* is available, every sort of didacticism will indoctrinate. Hence didacticism ought to be labeled immoral.

In the view of Patricia Smart²⁶ indoctrination occurs whenever one point of view is put forward to the exclusion of another equally legitimate point of view, or when matters which are in dispute are put forward as established.

Many experts²⁷ present examples how the directive moral education can violate a student's autonomy and involve sectarian teaching (which is inappropriate to a society in which the idea of moral equality is maintained). In this respect, as Reiman put it, roots of equity because he²⁸ assumes a natural fact about human beings is that all human beings are equal in being persons. He concludes: because subjectivity is a universal human trait, we reach here the natural equality of human beings.

For Aristotle²⁹ human beings are furnished by nature with a capacity for receiving virtues and perfect them through custom. That is, not one of the Moral Virtues comes to be in us merely by nature:

²⁶ Patricia Smart: The Concept of Indoctrination (From: Langford, Glenn & O'Connor D. J. (editors): *New Essays in the Philosophy of Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1973), pg. 37

²⁷ George Sher and William J. Bennett: *Moral Education and Indoctrination* (From: George Sher: *Moral Philosophy – Selected Readings*, University of Vermont, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, San Diego, 1987), pg. 102

²⁸ Jeffrey Reiman: *Justice and Modern Moral Philosophy*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990, pg. 49

²⁹ Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, New York, 1998, pg. 20 (1103 a)

because of such things that exist by nature, none can be changed by custom: a stone for instance, by nature gravitating downwards, could never by custom be brought to ascend. This is the reason why Aristotle would approve the Oldenquist's³⁰ view that the famous early Christian named Saint Anthony was not a virtuous man because he had to exert almost superhuman effort to resist his temptation. In his agonizing struggle to sustain his intention, he had to sacrifice dramatically. What is important to Aristotle is not the suffering, nor the power of the will; it is rather the correct habituation. So the virtuous human character is trained to find virtue pleasant; he or she will value autonomy as the most important prerequisite of morality, regardless of the faith he appreciates.

For instance, Art³¹ presented a very attractive, "democratic" definition of morality by saying, *Morality is seeing yourself as one person among many equals*. That is, ethics is no trivial matter, but how a modern man, a citizen, ought to live.

Even though that all what is human might metaphysically be dependent on God, in religion, moral commandments do not require justification. Yet, in philosophy, moral principles are logically held independent of the historical and social context in which it may have first received expression. Moral reasons are not only a means to establishing ethics, but are constitutive of it.

³⁰ Andrew G. Oldenquist: *Moral Philosophy - Text and Readings*, Second Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1978, pg. 5: "In his discussion of moral virtue Aristotle says little about intention and will power: it is by correct habituation, not by will power, that the virtuous man is able to resist temptation and do the right thing. If a man is virtuous he will take pleasure in doing the right thing; and if he does not find virtuous actions pleasant, but instead must exert will power, his habit (and hence his virtue) is imperfect. For example, in our moral tradition we are expected to admire the moral character of Saint Anthony, an early Christian who went alone to meditate in the Egyptian desert. There he had visions in which he was tempted by voluptuous women and luxury, but after an agonizing, nearly superhuman effort of will he was able to resist his temptations. Now whether or not it is virtuous to resist such desires is beside the point here. Aristotle would reason that in any case Saint Anthony was not a virtuous man since he found virtuous actions difficult and unpleasant, thus revealing that he had not been trained to find virtue pleasant and vice disagreeable."

³¹ Brad Art: *Ethics and the Good Life - A Text with Readings*, Westfield State College, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1993, pg. 22

Conclusion

The correct method of thinking in ethical matters requires us to refrain from equating the evaluative level of thinking with the descriptive level of thinking. We are human beings, and we must be accountable to reason. The denial of the logical autonomy of moral discourse has even worse implications on ethical theory: namely, the quest for growth of humanity relies on morally justified reasoning in which activities that promote values are needed. Morally justified reasoning implies not only advertising what is good; it is likely to ordain what is right. If the recognition of autonomy of moral discourse is lacking, it will lead to the idea that matters of value are relative and arbitrary, so that everybody can remake the world in terms of his or her own religious or ideological views. In ethical terms, such neutral stand towards everything what is valuable is not virtuous because neutrality in investigating the truth abandons the truth. In the prospective of Aristotelian tradition, virtuous life and religious life must not coincide because virtue has to be perfected through correct habituation, and it has nothing to do with the power of the will to exert unverifiable commitment.

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