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COMPARATIVE MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

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Abstract:

Moral Philosophy is the branch of philosophy which studies right and wrong behavior in Human conduct. It is also called ethics, detailing moral obligations. It aims to determine how individuals ought to live and act; hence this paper compares human conduct as prescribed by human reasoning (i.e. moral philosophy and moral theology. i.e. human conduct as commanded by divine laws contained in Holy books. Certain views maintain that at some points, divine moral laws require human reasoning for interpretation and clarification. These human reasoning factors in interpreting and developing divine laws often crosses the Rubicon into theism in using human reasoning to explain religious moral laws. Human reasoning, anti-theism in moral Theology, at times exposes Christian ethics as that which uses human reasoning to sabotage divine revelations.

Keywords: **Comparative, Moral Philosophy, Moral Theology**

Introduction

The study compares moral philosophy to moral theology on the familiar fronts of faith and reason. Moral philosophy (or ethics) produces human codes of conducts through human reasoning and prevailing situational and environmental circumstances. Moral theology on its own, depends on holy books, revelations, homilies and ecclesiastical proclamations for its moral commandments (Nnaji Ogundu, 2012:5-20). Failure to obey divine laws often attracts severe consequences, with promises of good rewards for obedience. Moral philosophy in its Meta-ethics, investigates origins and meaning of ethical concepts, while normative ethics goes beyond asking, “what is morality? (in Meta-ethics), rather it verifies standards that establish right and wrong conduct under concepts like Utilitarianism deontology and virtues in ethics (R, C, Holy and Oaklander Nathan L; 1992:328-393, 344, 360) Relating these to situational ethics, consequentialism and divine moral laws, applied ethics in its real-world

contextual issues like capital punishment and euthanasia etc. begs for answer if all moral laws must be obeyed despite inequalities and consequential dilemmas.

What is moral philosophy?

This study does not necessarily introduce new or strange knowledge to human moral conducts debates; rather it throws itself into an unresolved conflict i.e. if human reasoning or divine moral laws in Holy Books, gives us appropriate moral guidance, citing the slippery slope argument as an example. Relativity in Moral Principles debates, wonders if moral principles are relative, pointing to if morality is derived from reason, religion, emotion social or group circumstances; or from what. This often has one answer from moral theology, which is that moral laws come from God and divine revelations. (i.e. in theological circles), then from human then from human reasoning, in philosophical perspectives.

Moral Philosophy speaks of relativity, while Moral Theology objects to a relativity that can drag it into a slippery slope that avoids loopholes. Hence, while human reasoning welcomes relativity antecedents, Moral Theology can be a totalism which does not question revelation (Kanachikhuzy, 1988). Though Moral Theology and Moral Philosophy are meant to provide essential tools for handling moral intricacies in human behavior, in an existence of human excesses, the fact remains that natural human.

Moral instincts already have some answers to such human moral questions. (NET:2026) and Nnaji (2010) in socio-economic origins and definition of philosophy. Moral philosophy, or ethics, is the branch of philosophy that systematically studies, defends and recommends concepts of right and wrong behavior to determine how one ought to live. It investigates the nature of morality, principles of conduct, and values to address practical, real-life moral problems. Key components and areas of study include:

- **Metaethics:** Investigates the origin, nature, and meaning of moral values, principles, and language (e.g., “What is goodness?”).
- **Normative Ethics:** Examines standards or criteria for determining what is morally right or wrong, focusing on system like utilitarianism (outcomes), deontology (duty), and virtue ethics (character).
- **Applied Ethics:** Applies theoretical tools to resolve specific, controversial, real-world issues such as war, abortion, or animal rights. (Moral Philosophy; NET, February 2026). Moral philosophy explores what constitutes a good life, good character, and right actions. It provides reasons for adopting certain moral principles over others. It helps individuals navigate complex situations to make ethical decisions.

What is moral theology (NET 2026) and Nnaji (2010) in medical theology and Medical Ethics.

Moral theology is the branch of Christian theology, particularly within Roman Catholic tradition, that studies human acts to determine if they align with divine revelation, scripture and tradition. It guides moral behavior character and decision-making by examining the relationship between faith and conduct. Often in contrast to secular ethics.

Key aspects of moral theology include:

- **Foundation in Revelation:** Unlike philosophy, which relies solely on human reason, Moral Theology relies on Divine Revelation (the teachings of Jesus Christ) to determine moral principles.
- **Goal-oriented:** It focuses on helping humans attain their supreme, supernatural end (union with God) through right actions.
- **Virtue and Action:** It addresses both the character of the person (virtues) and the morality of specific actions, examining what it means to live a good, Christian life.
- **Components:** It incorporates natural law (inherent human moral capacity), Scripture, Church tradition, and sometimes insights from human sciences like psychology.
- **Contemporary Application:** Modern Moral Theology, particularly post-Vatican II, often focuses on social justice, conscience, and positive moral action rather than just forbidding vices. It is often considered synonymous with Christian ethics (NET, February 2026).

The slippery Slope Comparative Argument

The slippery slope argument claims that a relatively small first step (A) will inevitably lead to a chain of related, negative events, in a significant often catastrophic final outcome (2). It is a persuasive technique often based on fear or speculation, rather than creative evidence, aiming to stop action by exaggerating potential consequences (Slippery Slope Argument; Online February, (2026). The Slippery Argument asserts that if you allow A to happen, it will trigger series of intermediate steps (A, B, C, D)

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Case studies include debates on policy, such as that “legalizing Marijuana will lead to the breakdown of society”, or, in examination issues, “allowing a test retake will lower grades”. While often associated with descending into chaos, the slope scenario can also be used for a “road to paradise” argument, predicting that a small step will lead to a perfect, desirable future. This type of argument is frequent in

political, ethical, and daily discussions, often used to create anxiety about potential worst-cases scenarios. Understanding the slippery slope helps in critically evaluating arguments, ensuring that one is not swayed by fear mongering or unsubstantiated projections of future events. (Euthanasia and the slippery slope, 2026). The position of Moral Theology in all these rests comfortably on divine moral laws or commandment which obeys God's Law rather than human reasoning.

Investigation of Human Reasoning (Kant, Immanuel: McGrawHill; 2003)

Perhaps an aspect of this type of study not yet focused on, is the reliability of human reasoning as an essential tool for providing guidance to human moral conduct. Philosophy of mind and origins of the human intellect are useful in this respect. For something to be considered a tool for investigation or guidance, an investigation of the investigator is necessary, since when the blind leads the blind, an obvious physical fallacy is definitely inevitable. Human reasoning is obviously relative, particularly noticing that one man's sanity can be another man's psychoses. Biblically stated "A man's ways (and thoughts) seemeth right to him, but the end can be disaster (Amplified, 2008) Added to this is that your thoughts are okay to you until you meet superior reasoning abilities (Ogundu Nnaji; 2026; Psychology of Religion, Post Graduate Lecture series)

Investigation of Revelation

Philosophy of Religion primarily arose as Natural Theology in the Post reformation era (i.e. c164CE to date), by questioning the existence of spirituality and God. Naturally, questioning the existence of God is questioning the authenticity of divine revelations. This study does not question the existence of God or revelation, rather as already noted from a post-ancient philosopher, the point is that, madmen will not allow us know who is madman and who is a prophet, since insanity at times bears resemblance to prophetic ecstasy. Thus Lasebikan (1983) noted that, ecstatic prophet utterances can be mistaken for mental issues due to similarities in their characteristics. Identifying genuine Human Reasoning and Genuine revelations (Nnaji Ogundu, 2020); Introduction to Dictionary of Psychology of Religion. Those who have passed through driving lessons are told to consider themselves as the only sane person on the roads. That applied to this study is very simple, that one can possibly think well than another person, which also means that one's meant is definitely another one's poison. Hence, in human reasoning, relativity shows up again, through it soon gives way to universality when issues of human blood and human conscience appear. There is no cultural setting in existence which does not view human bold as sacred while human conscience remains that inner judge and consciousness that constantly convicts one of right and wrong conducts (Donald C. Abbott, 2003). Proving the reliability of human reasoning, is like radicalism and liberalism; or better still like indoctrination and tolerance, whereby, 'my own is better than yours'. If related to a totally rewired (mentally) indifferent personality, it brings up again relativity in human reasoning which sees good or bad only from its own perspective.

Hence, why relativity in Human reasoning? It simply means that human reasoning follows or arrives from certain factors such as:

1. Genetics
2. Brain chemistry controlled by Neurotransmitters
3. Environmental co-relates
4. Existential experiences
5. Childhood and Educational orientations
6. Religious indoctrinations
7. Cultural stereotypes
8. War and trauma
9. Poverty, lack and want;
10. Mental Instability etc.

All these constitute situations and circumstances capable of influencing human reasoning positively and negatively. Perhaps nos 6 and 7, i.e. “Religious and Cultural Stereotypes”, are narratives serving as parallel latitudes, to questions marks hanging over the reliability or non-reliability of human reasoning as guiding or assessment tool in human moral conduct.

Can religious indoctrination serve as Moral guides?

A plethora of religious beliefs already vindicates this paper’s view that human reasoning is suspect of subjectivism, hence, possibly unreliable as a moral guide, seen through certain universal principles like sanctity of human blood and human life. This includes the sacredness of truth and transparency which remains instinctive moral imperatives that continues to defy relativity in human reasoning.

Religion, without the word indoctrination is already Indoctrination, particularly so far intuition and revelation are involved. (Ogundu Nnaji, 2025). This brings in hallucination, delusion, false prophecies, false intuitions, and innuendos (Hobbies in Leviathan, 1651), hence, Polygamy in one religion is an aberration to a rival narrative. Similarly, truth speaking in defense of faith (apologetics) can spuriously lead fabrications to alternate opinions reading from other pages. One of the questions that can always hang on religion as possible indoctrinations, is “how come the worship of one God has multiple opposing revelations clearly antagonistic and confrontational to each other; thus, pointing clearly to the popular saying that where there is an original there must be a counterfeit, especially violent counterfeits.

Conclusion

For us to arrive at possible conclusions on this study, flipping and rolling over pages of relevant literature, makes relevant suspect, since what we term relevant literature are also products of subjective and semi-objective (i.e. pretenders) research studies written from different sides of human reasoning convictions, rather than from literature of data consulted. Such data and literature consulted, are suspects

themselves. Moving away from our sophistry to down to earth submissions, our research observation could be as simple as, that in our present world, ethics is ruled by human reasoning, while morality is controlled by Holy books. Those assertions thus raise other questions i.e. “Are we inferring or stating that ethics and morality are not the same? If that can be the case, then we needed to have asked and answered this question before embarking on this question before embarking on this research effort. Nonetheless, that question can still be asked and answered here. (Ogunde Nnaji, 2025, Postgraduate Lecture series). The question is, Is Ethics the same as morality?

Answer: Ethics is moral philosophy, since its morality is produced through human reasoning; while moral theology is morality, since right and wrong human conducts are determined according to divine and spiritual prerogatives; this remains current positions of the worlds of moral philosophy and moral theology, signaling the continued polarization of philosophical and theological schools of thought (Ogundu, 2025)

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