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A SKILL-BASED FRAMEWORK
FOR TEACHING MORALITY AND RELIGION

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Abstract: One important aim of moral philosophy courses is to help students build the skills necessary to make their own well-reasoned decisions about moral issues. This includes the skill of determining when a particular moral reason provides a good answer to a moral question or not. Helping students think critically about religious reasons like "because God says so" and "because scripture explicitly says so" can be challenging because such lessons can be misperceived as coercive or anti-religious. I describe a framework for teaching about religion and moral reasons that I have found overcomes these challenges while also building generalizable skill at analyzing and evaluating moral reasons.

Keywords: teaching moral reasoning skills, skill-building discussions, teaching religion and morality, teaching controversial issues

INTRODUCTION

Like all disciplines in higher education, philosophy is increasingly called upon to justify its value. In response, many philosophers and philosophy instructors emphasize the role philosophy can play in helping students develop valuable critical thinking skills. Ethics courses can make this point very clearly: it is hard to deny that good moral reasoning skills are essential for navigating our personal, civic, and professional lives.

But designing course activities that actually build such skills takes careful planning, and often student pre-conceptions can make the task even more challenging. Nowhere is this more obvious than with questions about the relationship between morality and religion.

An important goal of moral philosophy courses is to give students practice understanding and evaluating moral arguments by looking at particular moral issues like euthanasia, abortion, GLBTQ relationships, environmental ethics, animal welfare, and so on. And, doing this well requires taking seriously the arguments and reasons students bring with them and walking them through the process of carefully evaluating those arguments and reasons. For many moral issues, students will sometimes be concerned to understand whether reasons

like "because God says so" or "because scripture explicitly says so" count as good moral reasons, either because these are reasons they themselves hold to or because they are reasons offered by friends, family members, or fellow citizens. I believe it is the job of a good philosophy instructor to model how to take these reasons seriously and to help students build skills they can use to critically evaluate them. The proper goal of the instructor, *qua* instructor, is not to tell students what to think but to help them build skills that will enable them to make their own well-reasoned decisions. But, sometimes students' attitudes about religion can interfere with understanding and working towards this goal.

For instance, teaching about the Euthyphro Dilemma can be a useful way to get students to think about whether God's commands are what make conduct morally good or bad. And discussing examples of explicit commandments from scripture that even devout people have good reason to reject can be a useful way to get students to think about whether reading scripture literally provides good moral guidance. But, starting with these lessons without showing that they are applications of more general points that could be made about moral reasons invites misunderstandings that obstruct successful teaching. Focusing on Socrates' question in the Euthyphro Dilemma without prior reflection on the distinction it is making risks eliciting defensive reactions in some students who are prone to seeing their religious beliefs as under attack. And, focusing right away on the unreliability of literal readings of scripture can make some students feel that it is the scripture (or their religion) that is under scrutiny, when in fact it is a particular way of utilizing scripture that is being evaluated.

To some extent, hostility to critically evaluating beliefs – like religious ones – that are central to many people's identity is hard to completely avoid. An approachable and collaborative teaching style can remove much of the aversion students might have to the project of critically scrutinizing their beliefs. However, I think there are ways we can even further remove barriers to this important project. I will describe a new framework for teaching morality and religion that, I have found, avoids the misunderstandings that can affect more traditional ways of teaching about morality and religion while also helping students acquire generally applicable skills for evaluating moral reasons. This framework builds on important ideas that are part of the more traditional method for teaching morality and religion by distinguishing between different types of moral reasons and having students practice identifying and evaluating them by examining both non-religiously motivated reasons and explicitly religiously-motivated reasons.

OVERVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK

My skill-based framework is composed of several steps, each of which includes a short lecture introducing a concept or idea and practice exercises intended to test student comprehension and give them practice applying the concepts.

In the first step, I make a distinction between two types of moral reasons: what I call explanatory reasons, and enumerative reasons. Explanatory reasons are reasons that are supposed to explain *what makes* an action good, bad, right or wrong. Enumerative reasons are supposed to explain *which* actions are good, bad, right or wrong but *not* what makes those actions good, bad, right or wrong. I describe two tests for determining whether a given reason is explanatory or enumerative and a way to determine whether an enumerative reason is a good (reliable) or bad (unreliable) one. Students then are given exercises that help them both practice these skills on ordinary and often-heard moral reasons and reflect on why it is important to distinguish these two types of reasons.

In the second step, I have students apply the skills from the first step to analyze "because God says so." If this is a reason given for why an action is right or wrong, should we view it as explanatory or enumerative? We start first with a more accessible and non-theological case that is analogous and then have students think through whether they should view "because God says so" as an explanatory reason or an enumerative one. This is precisely what we do when we teach the Euthyphro Dilemma, but by making this task an application of a more general point we've already applied to more mundane (and less contentious) reasons, we can help students avoid misperceiving the point of the lesson. Students then usually identify on their own the problems with viewing "because God says so" as an explanatory reason and conclude that we should view it as an enumerative reason.

In the third step, we move on to evaluate "because scripture explicitly says so." If "because God says so" is an enumerative reason, then it doesn't tell us what makes conduct good, bad, right or wrong, but it would (given common theological assumptions) help us identify which actions are right or wrong if there is a God and we can identify what God commands. Typically, justifying what God commands, and so what is right, wrong, good, or bad, comes with an appeal to scripture: actions are often said to be right or wrong "because scripture explicitly says so." In this step, we use the lessons from step one to see if this a good enumerative reason. By distinguishing two methods of reading scripture (reading literally and interpreting), we can see that "because scripture explicitly says so" recommends a way of reading scripture (reading literally) that even devout believers have good reason to reject. This allows us also to emphasize that this leaves it open that reading scripture a different way (interpreting it) can still be plausible. We conclude by applying the lessons from step one about the comparative value of explanatory and enumerative reasons.

In the fourth and final step, we discuss the implications of what we've learned. We discuss why the arguments we've looked at don't show that religion can't play an important role in a person's moral life. Instead, if they are good arguments, they show that working towards a grasp of explanatory reasons is an unavoidable task for us if we want to be good people. Importantly, this means

that all of us, whether we're religious or not, need to be doing the same kind of hard thinking.

Below I will give a brief overview these steps, each of which is composed of a combination of *introductory lectures* (introducing a new topic, idea, or skill), *exercises* (discussion activities that test comprehension or provide practice of a skill), and *summarizing lectures* (which explain and illustrate important lessons from an exercise). In many cases, the points from the summarizing lectures are covered very completely during discussion of the exercises, but here I provide more substantial summarizing lectures to illustrate the points I try to emphasize. Also, the introductory lectures can in many cases be condensed to accommodate the aptitude of specific student groups, and they are intended to be delivered interactively – by posing and discussing questions with the whole class.

STEP 1: EXPLANATORY VS. ENUMERATIVE MORAL REASONS

Introductory lecture:

Reasons for action are considerations that tell for or against actions or ways of conducting oneself. And, a few familiar examples can show that we should distinguish two types of reasons for action: *explanatory reasons* and *enumerative reasons.*[i]

Suppose your friend sees you about to eat some deep fried cheese curds at the state fair. She says, "You shouldn't eat those cheese curds, because they're on the list of foods your doctor said to avoid." Here, she's given you a reason that you ought not eat the cheese curds: because they're on the list of foods your doctor said you should stay away from. This reason she's given identifies *what* you ought or ought not do: in this case, you ought not eat the greasy ball of fried cheese in your hand. Notice, though, that your friend's reason doesn't explain *what makes* eating the cheese curds something you ought not do. The fact your doctor said you shouldn't eat salty fried cheese isn't the reason *why* eating the cheese is a bad idea for you: presumably, what makes it a bad idea is that it's bad for your health. So, "because your doctor said not to eat cheese curds" is what we could call an *enumerative reason*: it identifies *what* you ought or ought not do but not *why* you ought to do it. (To enumerate things is to list them off.)

On the other hand, suppose your friend sees you about to eat the cheese curds and she tells you that you ought to put them down and get a fresh peach instead. You ask her why, and she says, "because salty, fatty foods like that are bad for your health – they'll raise your already perilously high blood pressure and cholesterol." This kind of reason tells you not only *what* you ought to do but also *why*: it explains what makes eating the deep-fried treat a bad idea. Reasons that do this – that *explain why* you ought or ought not do things or *explain what makes* them things you ought or ought not do – can be called *explanatory reasons*.

We rely on the distinction between enumerative and explanatory reasons all the time. If you're just interested in figuring out what you should or shouldn't eat, then the fact that your doctor said to eat some foods but not others might be all you need. You can just rely on "because the doctor said to eat … but not …" to help you *enumerate what* you should or shouldn't eat. But, the more conscientious of us will want more: we'll want a reason that *explains why* we should pass over the cheese curds for the fresh fruit.

Indeed, enumerative reasons are often the sort we start out with when we're first learning something or just working to acquire a basic understanding. A novice at computer repair might replace the video card because their teacher told them that's what they ought to do. Their reason here would then be enumerative: at best, it tells you what you ought to do but not why that's the thing to do. To really become proficient, though, the novice will need to start looking for explanatory reasons: they'll need to be able to identify *why* replacing the video card is the thing to do. The expert's grasp of these kind of explanatory reasons is part of what distinguishes her from a mere novice who is good at following instructions.

Moral reasons are a type of reason for action. Specifically, moral reasons are reasons conduct is good, bad, right, wrong, or all-things-considered something that ought to be done. Think of times when someone says "that's right (or wrong, good, or bad) because …" Whatever comes after the 'because' is the moral reason being offered: it's the reason being offered for or against whatever conduct you're talking about.

For instance, suppose people say:
a) Having sex with an acquaintance who is intoxicated is wrong because you don't have their consent.
b) Donating to poverty relief organizations is right because it helps alleviate serious suffering with no significant sacrifice on your part.
c) Lying to children when they are capable of understanding the truth is wrong because it disrespects their ability to choose.
d) Keeping animals in zoos is wrong because it stifles their wellbeing without good cause.
e) Abortion is wrong because it ends an innocent human life.
f) Abortion is morally permissible because a person is not obligated to allow others to use their body to sustain their life.

In each of these cases, some reason is being given for or against a particular way of conducting oneself. So, in each case, moral reasons are being offered. What's the reason it's wrong to tell five year-old Jimmy that Santa's real or to hide the grisly truth from ten year-old Juanita about her cat's recent disappearance? According to the person making claim (c), the reason is that it disrespects the children's ability to make their own decisions about how to respond to the facts of life.

One important thing to notice about moral reasons is that some are good and some are bad. Does claim (c) give a good reason to avoid lying to children? Supposing we're talking about a particular case of abortion, should we go with the reason offered in (e) or the one offered in (f)? Or is there some other better reason? Especially when it comes to tricky and complicated topics, people will disagree and will give you conflicting moral reasons. If you're thoughtful, you'll often be stuck with the task of weighing a variety of reasons for and against some course of action. In other words, you'll be stuck trying to determine which moral reasons are good and which are not: which actually do tell for or against a course of action and which don't. That's a big part of what moral philosophy is about: learning skills to enable us to identify good moral reasons and distinguish them from the bad. For now, it is just important to note that moral reasons are considerations that are supposed to tell for or against a particular course of action, and good moral reasons are the ones that actually do that while bad moral reasons are ones that do not. Later we'll discuss some strategies for distinguishing good and bad moral reasons. For now, the point is just that there's a distinction to be made between them.

Another thing to notice about moral reasons is that, like other reasons for action, they can be either explanatory or enumerative.

Consider again the claim that lying to children is wrong because it disrespects their ability to choose. This is an explanatory moral reason because it is supposed to explain *why* an action is good, bad, right, wrong, or something that ought or ought not be done. In fact, all the examples in (a) – (f) offer explanatory moral reasons, because they're trying to explain not only what's right (wrong, etc.) but also *what makes it so*.

Other moral reasons are enumerative: they identify what's right or wrong (or good or bad) but not what makes it so. Suppose you are wondering whether you ought to reveal to your teacher that your friend cheated on an exam. You ask your mother, who suggests that you should try to convince your friend to confess to the teacher. Suppose also that you know that your mother is a very reliable judge of such things. We then have a moral reason: you ought to try to convince your friend to fess up because your (wise) mother says that's best. This may be a moral reason in the sense that it's supposed to tell for or against a particular course of action. But, it is an enumerative moral reason, because it doesn't explain *what makes* the conduct in question right or good. Instead, at best it merely explains *which* conduct is right or good.

To see why, ask yourself this question: is convincing your friend to fess up good because your mom says it's good, or does your mom say it's good because it is good? The first option, that convincing your friend to fess up is good because your mom says so, would be treating "because your mom says so" as an explanatory moral reason: it would be claiming that your mom's saying that

course of action is good is *what makes* it good. The second option, that your mom says that convincing your friend to fess up is good because it is good, would be treating "because your mom says so" as an enumerative moral reason: it would be claiming that your mom's saying the course of action is good *gives us reason to believe that* it is good but does *not* explain *what makes* it good. Clearly, the second option makes the most sense. After all, we want to say that your mother's wisdom is what enables her to reliably judge about what you should do. And, that means we're saying that some courses of action are good independently of what your mom says, but your mom, being wise, sees which are good and advises you accordingly. If that's the way to look at things, then "because mom says so" at best explains which action is right or good, but it doesn't explain what makes that action right or good.

This shows that there are actually two types of moral reasons: enumerative and explanatory. Moral reasons in general are considerations that are supposed to tell for or against a way of conducting ourselves. Some moral reasons are explanatory: they explain not only which conduct is right (wrong, etc.) but also *what makes* it so. Other moral reasons are enumerative: they identify *which* actions are right (wrong, etc.) but not *what makes* them right (wrong, etc.). And, as in other areas, we start out trying to identify enumerative reasons, but grasping explanatory reasons is what we really need to be moral experts.

So, how can you tell whether a moral reason is best understood as an explanatory reason or an enumerative reason? We'll learn two tests you can use to determine if a moral reason is best understood as an explanatory one.

An explanatory moral reason is a reason that's supposed to explain what makes conduct (either in general or in a particular case) good, bad, right or wrong. So, if a moral reason doesn't really give a plausible explanation of what makes conduct good (bad, right or wrong), then we shouldn't consider it an explanatory moral reason.

The general strategy for thinking about whether a moral reason gives a good explanation of what makes conduct good, bad, right or wrong is to think carefully through its implications. If the explanation implies things that are clearly false or implausible, then the explanation itself must be implausible. To illustrate this strategy, we'll look at a few specific tests that be used to evaluate the implications of a proposed constitutive moral reason. These aren't the only tests to use, but they are often helpful ones, and they illustrate the general strategy we can use to tell which moral reasons count as explanatory and which don't.

To illustrate, let's use another example. Suppose that your father, in the midst of giving you an awkward but well-meaning talk about safe sex, emphasizes that it's wrong to have sex with someone who is intoxicated and can't consent. Later that week at a party, you overhear some acquaintances from school boasting about how they used alcohol as a tool in their sexual conquests. You confront them

and tell them that having sex with someone who is intoxicated is wrong because your father says so. Should we consider "because my father says so" an explanatory reason or an enumerative one?

Clearly, "because my father says so" doesn't count as an explanatory moral reason. To see that, we can apply a few tests.

One test is what I'll call *the reversal test*. To perform this test, ask yourself if you think the moral status of the action would change if the consideration being offered as a reason were not the case. In this case, that means asking if you think having sex with an intoxicated person would be morally permissible if your father had said it was permissible (but otherwise the nature and effects of the action were the same). In this case, I suspect you'll agree that it would not: whether your dad has a view about these things or has shared it with you doesn't determine whether it's wrong or not. "Because my father says so" fails the reversal test not just in this case but in all others as well: if your father suddenly started telling you slavery was not wrong (but the nature and effects were otherwise the same), would you say that would make it morally permissible to have slaves? I suspect not, and for good reason. So "because my father says so" doesn't count as an explanatory moral reason, because it offers a bad explanation of what makes conduct right or wrong.

Another test, which I'll call *the justification test*, brings us to the same conclusion. To perform this test, ask why the consideration being offered as a reason is true. If the answer needs to refer to the rightness, wrongness, goodness, or badness of the action, then the test is failed. For instance, consider your dad's guidance again. The consideration you're offering against having sex with an intoxicated person is that your dad says it's wrong. But let's ask this: *why* does your dad say it's wrong? Surely, if you asked your dad why he says it's wrong, he'd say: because it *is* wrong. He'd then probably start to give an explanation of what makes it wrong (it fails to show respect for others' capacity to consent, and so on). If that's the case, then *he said* it's wrong because it *is* wrong, not the other way around. And that means that "because my dad says so" can't be an explanatory moral reason, because it doesn't give a plausible explanation of what makes conduct right or wrong (or good or bad).

Evaluating enumerative moral reasons takes a similar strategy: to decide if an enumerative moral reason reliably identifies which conduct is good, bad, right or wrong, we have to think about its implications. Since enumerative moral reasons don't explain why conduct is good, bad, right or wrong, we don't have to decide whether they give a good explanation of that. Instead, we have to see if they reliably identify which things are good or right and which are not.

To illustrate, let's go back to our example of your father's guidance that having sex with someone who is intoxicated is wrong. When your classmates asked you why this was wrong, we supposed you said, "because my father says so." This

isn't an explanatory moral reason but instead an enumerative one: at best, it shows *that* having sex with an intoxicated person is wrong without really trying to explain *what makes it* wrong. But, does it really show *that* having sex with an intoxicated person is wrong? Is it a *good* enumerative moral reason?

To figure that out, we need evidence of this reason's reliability. How likely is it that you'll end up doing the good, right, or best thing if you do exactly what your father says? The problem is that you won't be able to tell whether your father's guidance is reliable in situations like these unless you have some grasp of what makes conduct good or bad in those kinds of situations. That is, you'd need a good grasp of plausible explanatory moral reasons about these or similar situations in order to decide if following your father's guidance is likely to lead you to the best course of action. After all, how else would you decide whether your father's guidance is reliable and worth heeding?

The problem with "because my father says so," then, is that we don't yet have reason to believe it provides reliable guidance: without a grasp of some of the relevant explanatory moral reasons, we don't have sufficient reason to believe that it likely leads you to do the right thing in this case. Trusting his guidance here might feel good, it might be comforting, it might give you a place to start when doing your own thinking about the issue, and it might give you peace of mind. But, by itself, it may not actually give you good reason to believe that trying to convince your acquaintances that using alcohol as a tool to have sex with people without acquiring their consent is wrong. (It *is* surely wrong – and there are good explanatory moral reasons to show why. But the point here is that merely saying "because my dad says so" is not a good enough reason even to show *that* it is wrong.)

Exercises: students complete these in small groups and then prepare to share their answers.

1. Suppose you find out that a business executive defrauded investors: he intentionally misinformed clients to get their money. Your friend says, "that's wrong because it's illegal." ***What kind of moral reason is that: explanatory or enumerative? Is it a good reason? Be sure to apply both the Reversal Test and the Justification Test to answer the first question.***

2. Suppose someone says that abortion is wrong "because you'll feel guilty if you do it." ***What kind of moral reason is that: explanatory or enumerative? Is it a good reason? Be sure to apply both the Reversal Test and the Justification Test to answer the first question.***

3. Suppose your friend offers this moral reason against a nurse or doctor performing euthanasia. Euthanasia, she says, is wrong "because it is prohibited by the American Medical Association (AMA) code of

ethics." *What kind of moral reason is that: explanatory or enumerative? Is it a good reason? Be sure to apply both the Reversal Test and the Justification Test to answer the first question.*

4. Suppose you're a nurse discussing a patient with another nurse. The patient is considering requesting physician-assisted suicide, which is legal in your state. Your fellow nurse argues that this would be wrong for the patient to do, "because they will be punished in the afterlife for it." Assume for the sake of argument that there is a God who punishes people in the afterlife for certain actions. *What kind of moral reason has your fellow nurse given: explanatory or enumerative? Is it a good reason? Be sure to apply both the Reversal Test and the Justification Test to answer the first question.*

5. Suppose you want to be an expert at fixing computers. You'll need to have a grasp of reasons that help you reliably succeed at fixing a broken computer. *Would working to find enumerative reasons be enough, or would you need to work at being able to grasp explanatory reasons? Does the same point apply to being a moral expert?*

STEP 2: APPLICATION TO "BECAUSE GOD SAYS SO"

Introductory lecture:

We can apply what we've learned here to evaluate two particular kinds of reasons that are sometimes offered as moral reasons: appeals to the authority of God or religious scripture. In fact, we can use the distinctions we've made so far to understand why many philosophers, including many religious philosophers, think that merely saying "because God says so" and "because scripture explicitly says so" do not provide us with good answers to moral questions.

To focus the discussion, we'll look at a particular case.

In 2015, Kim Davis, a county clerk in Kentucky, defied the Supreme Court. After the Court declared that same-sex couples are entitled to the same marriage rights as opposite sex couples, many gay and lesbian couples went to the Rowan County Courthouse to pick up the license that afforded them the legal rights they'd long waited for and that symbolized the social recognition that had previously seemed impossible.

Davis, whose job it was to process the license applications, saw things differently. Citing her religious convictions, Davis refused to process marriage licenses for same-sex couples, saying that "[t]o issue a marriage license which conflicts with God's definition of marriage, with my name affixed to the certificate, would violate my conscience."[ii] As the dispute unfolded, it became clear that Davis believed same-sex marriage is wrong because God forbids it and that we

have good reason to think this is so because the Bible explicitly says precisely that (in *Leviticus* 18:22 and *Romans* 1:26). For those reasons, she and her supporters viewed her defiance as an act of bravery and integrity.

This case raises some important questions: are "because God says so" and "because scripture explicitly says so" good moral reasons, even for a devout believer like Davis?

Exercise: after the exercise is explained, students discuss in small groups and prepare to share their answers.

6. Suppose there's a perfect teacher who gives all and only excellent papers an A grade. Suppose the teacher gives you an A on your paper. ***Should we say that (a) the paper is excellent because the teacher gave it an A, or that (b) the teacher gave it an A because it is excellent? Which option views "because the teacher gave it an A" as an explanatory reason, and which views "because the teacher gave it an A" as an enumerative reason? Which way of viewing things is more plausible? (Be sure to apply the tests.)***

Summarizing lecture:

We've supposed that there is a perfect teacher: she gives all and only excellent papers an A grade. This tells us *which* papers are excellent (the ones the teacher gives an A), but it doesn't yet tell us *what makes* them excellent. To decide what to say about that, we can ask a question like Socrates's question: (a) are the papers excellent because the teacher gave them an A, or (b) did the teacher give them an A because they are excellent?

The difference between options (a) and (b) is that on option (a) the teacher's grade is what makes the paper excellent, while on option (b) it is not. On option (a), the teacher's giving a paper an A is what actually makes it an excellent paper. But, on option (b), the teacher's giving the paper an A is not what makes it excellent. Instead, it was excellent independently of the teacher's grade, and the teacher (being perfect) sees this and grades it accordingly. In other words, option (a) says that "because the teacher gave it an A" is an explanatory reason the paper is excellent, while option (b) says it is an enumerative reason the paper is excellent.

Which option should we take? If we assume there's such a teacher who gives all and only excellent papers an A, then we either have to say that the teacher's grade is what makes the paper excellent or it is not. And, it can't be both: either the teacher's putting an A on it is what makes it excellent, or it isn't.

To try to decide, let's apply the tests we discussed earlier.

First, consider how we'd apply the reversal test: think about whether merely changing the teacher's grade would change whether the paper is actually excellent. For several reasons, option (a) seems to fail the reversal test.

For one thing, option (a) implies that a paper could go from being *actually* excellent to being *actually* not excellent merely by the teacher changing the grade on it. That seems hard to believe: how could the quality of the paper itself change even if the features of the paper (the clarity of the writing, the degree to which its argument is compelling, the clarity of its organization, etc.) stay the same? Option (a) implies that these intrinsic features of the paper aren't what make it excellent, which is why it seems to give a bad explanation of what makes papers excellent.

For another thing, option (a) implies that whatever paper the teacher happens to give an A is therefore excellent, regardless of the nature of the paper itself. Suppose the teacher grades by this method: she lines up five buckets (labeled 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' 'D,' and 'F') and throws the papers at them. Whatever bucket the paper lands in determines what grade she gives it. Option (a) – the idea that the excellent papers are excellent because the teacher gave them an A – would imply that the papers that landed in the 'A' bucket were actually excellent. After all, on option (a) the mere fact that the teacher gives the paper an A is what makes it excellent, regardless of the teacher's reasons for giving it an A. But, clearly the mere fact that the teacher gives a paper an A after it lands in the 'A' bucket wouldn't make the paper excellent. That's because what makes a paper excellent is that it has certain intrinsic features (it is clear, precise, well-organized, compellingly argued, etc.), not whether a teacher (no matter how perfect) happens to give it an A.

If that's right, then option (a) is implausible, because it doesn't give a good explanation of what makes papers excellent or not: it isn't plausible to say that the paper is excellent because the teacher gave it an A.

But, you might at this point raise an objection: surely a perfect teacher wouldn't grade in that ridiculous way! No perfect teacher would grade using that horrible bucket method!

You'd surely be right about that. But all that does is give us further reason to reject option (a). After all, the point wasn't that the perfect teacher actually would grade this way but that *if* she did grade that way then option (a) would imply that the papers that received an A using that method are *actually* excellent. Since that's implausible, option (a) must be implausible, too.

In fact, we can only make sense of the idea that the perfect teacher wouldn't grade this way if we reject option (a). To see why, let's apply what we earlier called the justification test. Suppose the teacher sits down to grade a paper that

has such bad grammar it is nearly impossible to understand the author's point and that doesn't even have a clear topic (the paper bounces back and forth between a variety of topics but only paraphrases trivial ideas about them). Why would the perfect teacher not give this an A? Because she knows the paper is bad! And, if she knows the paper's bad, then this has to mean that it is bad independently of her grading it and she (being perfect) sees this and grades accordingly. But, if that's the case, then the teacher's giving it a D isn't what makes it not excellent. Other things (structure, clarity, the rigor and insightfulness of the argument, etc.) make it excellent or not, and the teacher just sees this and grades accordingly. The point is that saying the teacher is perfect requires saying that the paper was bad independently of her grading process and she knew this and graded accordingly. But, that can only be true if the teacher's grade isn't what makes it excellent or not.

Option (a) is implausible because it says the teacher's grade is what makes a paper excellent or not. If we said this, it wouldn't really make sense to say the teacher knew the paper was excellent and that's why she gave it an A. After all, if option (a) is true, then the paper was neither excellent nor not excellent before the teacher graded it, because option (a) says that the teacher's grade is what makes it excellent! So, according to option (a), the teacher's being perfect is compatible with saying that she gave papers an A merely because they smelled good, had pretty ink, or were written by people with blue eyes. But, that's clearly too weak a notion of perfection: surely being a perfect teacher requires more than that.

The problem with option (a) can be summarized this way: saying that the paper is excellent because the perfect teacher gave it an A is implausible both because it gives a bad explanation of what makes papers excellent and because it can't explain what makes a good teacher good or a perfect teacher perfect.

Importantly, if we take option (b) we can avoid these problems. Option (b) says that the teacher gave the paper an A because it is excellent. That means that it is not the teacher's grade that makes it excellent but other things (perhaps like the structure, clarity, insightfulness, etc.). So, option (b) can give a plausible explanation of what makes papers excellent or not. And, option (b) can give a plausible explanation of what makes a perfect teacher perfect: she knows what papers are excellent or not and grades accordingly. So, option (b) avoids the problems of option (a) and is the better choice.

Introductory lecture:

Suppose then that there is a God and that God commands all and only good things and forbids all and only bad things. Once we've made these assumptions, we can still ask a question: (1) is conduct good because God commands it, or (2) does God command conduct because it is good?

This question is like the one Socrates asks in the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's dialogue the *Euthyphro*. The question is asking whether God's commands are *what make* conduct good or not, and it is the first step in a very influential argument (inspired by Socrates' question) known as *the Euthyphro Dilemma*.[iii] We're using our distinction between explanatory and enumerative reasons to understand this old and influential argument.

Exercise: students discuss in small groups and then prepare to share their answers.

7. Let's think about whether even devout people should view "because God says so" as an explanatory moral reason. To do that, let's assume for the sake of argument that there's an all-powerful, wholly good, and all-knowing God who commands all and only good conduct. Suppose that God forbids torturing babies for fun and that torturing babies for fun is bad. ***Should we say that (1) torturing babies for fun is bad because God forbids it, or that (2) God forbids torturing babies for fun because it is bad? Which option views "because God commands/forbids it" as an explanatory reason, and which views "because God commands/forbids it" as an enumerative reason? Which way of viewing things is more plausible? (Be sure to apply the tests.)***

Summarizing lecture:

For the same sorts of reasons we should view "because the teacher gave it an A" as an enumerative reason but not an explanatory one, devout believers should reject the idea that "because God says so" is an explanatory moral reason and instead see "because God says so" as an enumerative moral reason. In other words, if we're devout believers, we should reject option 1 (conduct is good because God commands it) in favor of option 2 (God commands conduct because it is good). If we could know the commands of an all-knowing and wholly good God, that could tell us *which* conduct is good or bad, but it doesn't explain *what makes* the good conduct good or the bad conduct bad.[iv]

To see why, let's first apply the reversal test. Option 1 fails the reversal test for the same kinds of reasons option a in the teacher example did.

For one thing, option 1 implies that whatever God happened to command would therefore actually be good regardless of the nature or effects of the action. Here's an action I'll bet we can agree is morally bad: torturing babies for fun. Suppose God came down and commanded you to torture babies for fun on every third Saturday. If "because God says so" were an explanatory moral reason (and God's commands were what make conduct good or bad), that would imply that it would therefore actually be good to torture the babies if God commanded it - even if the nature and effects of the torture (the suffering caused, and so on) were the same. But, even devout believers have reason to find these

implications implausible. After all, isn't it the intrinsic features of the torture (the suffering caused, the nature of the action, etc.) that make it bad? If we took option 1, we'd have to say that it was not those intrinsic features that make it bad, and this would mean that God could make the torturing good merely by commanding it.

You might be tempted to reply that God (being all knowing and wholly good) would never command us to do a thing like torturing babies for fun. Again, the point isn't that God actually did command this. The point is that *if* God had commanded it, we'd have to say torturing babies for fun would therefore be good if we say "because God says so" is an explanatory moral reason. But if the nature and effects of the torture were the same it would be hard to believe it would therefore be good merely because God commanded it. And, that is enough to show that even devout believers shouldn't view "because God says so" as an explanatory moral reason.

Applying the justification test is another way to get to that conclusion. *Why* would God never command that we torture babies for fun? Most will want to say: because God is wholly good and knows that torturing babies for fun is bad. But, that answer is admitting that "because God says so" is not an explanatory moral reason. After all, if God knows that the action is bad, then this has to mean that it is bad independently of God commanding it and God (being all-knowing and wholly good) sees this and commands accordingly. But, if that's the case, then God's command isn't what makes that action bad. Other things (the serious and unnecessary suffering, etc.) make it bad or not, and God sees this and commands accordingly. The point is that saying God is all-knowing and wholly good requires saying that conduct is good or bad independently of God's commands. But, that can only be true if the fact that God commands something doesn't explain what makes it good or bad. And that means we need to say that "because God says so" isn't an explanatory moral reason.

We could avoid these problems if we instead take option 2 and see "because God says so" as an enumerative moral reason. Option 2 says that God commands conduct because it is good. That means that it is not God's forbidding us to torture babies for fun that makes it bad but rather other things (the intense suffering, etc.). So, unlike option 1, option 2 can give a plausible explanation of what makes conduct good or bad. And, option 2 can give a plausible explanation of what makes God good: God knows what what's good or bad independently and commands accordingly. So, taking option 2 (and seeing "because God says so" as an enumerative moral reason) avoids the problems of option 1 (seeing "because God says so" as an explanatory moral reason).

For these reasons, many philosophers (including many religious ones) think that we should reject the idea that God's commanding or forbidding something is what makes it good or bad. If they're right, then "because God says so" is not a good explanatory moral reason. As always, your task will be to understand the

argument and carefully evaluate it so that you can make your own well-reasoned decision about what to think.

But, unless there is some way to argue that option 1 is not as problematic as it seems, then we should reject using "because God says so" as an answer to questions about what makes conduct morally good or bad. And, if that's the case, then if Kim Davis says that same-sex marriage is wrong, and someone asks her what makes it wrong, saying "because God forbids it" does not even answer the question.

 STEP 3: APPLICATION TO "BECAUSE SCRIPTURE EXPLICITLY SAYS SO"

Introductory lecture:

Still, we can imagine a reply Kim Davis (or others with similar views) might make:

> "Ok, so God's commands aren't *what make* conduct good or bad. Still, God's commands can tell us *what* is good or bad, since God is all-knowing and commands all and only good things. So we can know *what* is good and bad by figuring out what God wills and forbids, and we can figure that out by looking at what scripture explicitly says. For instance, Leviticus 18:22 says 'Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.' So, same-sex marriage is wrong because scripture explicitly says so."

Let's take this line of argument seriously and evaluate it, because that will help us decide whether "because scripture explicitly says so" is a good enumerative reason. It has to be enumerative and not explanatory, because the fact that scripture says something is right or wrong isn't supposed to explain *why* it's right or wrong but merely to show *that* it's right or wrong. According to this way of thinking, the fact that scripture explicitly says something is right or wrong is enough to show that it is actually right or wrong for us and we need not think about it any more.

Before we evaluate this idea, it is important to see that it is making an assumption about how we should read scripture – an assumption that we'll see we can reject without having to reject the idea that people can take scripture seriously.

We can make this assumption clear by distinguishing between two ways of using scripture to derive moral guidance: *reading scripture literally* and *interpreting scripture*. When you read scripture literally, you assume that if scripture explicitly says something is right/wrong that that is therefore enough to show it is actually right/wrong for us - no more thinking required. When you instead interpret scripture, you don't make this assumption: you don't assume that something is actually right/wrong for us merely because some passage or other explicitly says

it is right/wrong. Instead, when you interpret, you do hard thinking and apply your moral knowledge to determine what the underlying message of the passage is and whether and how it applies to us today, in circumstances that might differ significantly from the ones in which the scripture was originally written. As we'll see, religious traditions themselves have good reasons for saying the devout should interpret rather than read literally.

Exercise: students discuss this in small groups and then prepare to share their answers.

8. **Read the passage below together and try to decide: What would it mean to read this passage literally? What would it mean to interpret this passage?**

Qur'an 2:282: "O, you who have believed, when you contract a debt for a specified term, write it down. And let a scribe write [it] between you in justice. Let no scribe refuse to write as Allah has taught him. So let him write and let the one who has the obligation dictate. And let him fear Allah, his Lord, and not leave anything out of it. But if the one who has the obligation is of limited understanding or weak or unable to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate in justice. And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses - so that if one of the women errs, then the other can remind her."

Summarizing and introductory lecture:

To illustrate our distinction between reading scripture literally and interpreting it, we're looking at a passage from Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman on two ways to read a passage from the *Qur'an*:

> "For example, it is said (2:282) that in a credit transaction, the credit, large or small, should be written down and there should be two witnesses to the deed; the witnesses can be two reliable adult males or, if two are not available, then one male and two women 'so that if one of the two women should be forgetful, the other would remind her.' The reason for having two female witnesses instead of one male is that women would be more "forgetful" than men, since women in those days were normally not used to dealing with credit. According to the traditionalist understanding, the law that two female witnesses equal one male is eternal and a social change that enabled a woman to get used to financial transactions would be "un-Islamic." The modernist, on the other hand, would say that since the testimony of a woman being considered of less value than that of a man was dependent upon her weaker power of memory concerning

financial matters, when women became conversant with such matters –
with which there is not only nothing wrong but which is for the betterment
of society – their evidence can equal that of men."ᵛ

When Rahman talks about the traditionalist, he's talking about someone who
tries to read scripture literally. The traditionalist assumes that if a passage
explicitly says that something is right or wrong then it's therefore actually right or
wrong for us (no more thinking required). This assumption implies that taking
women's testimony as equal to a man's is always wrong and is wrong for us and
there's no more use thinking about the issue.

When Rahman talks about the "modernist," he is basically describing one way
this passage could be interpreted. Instead of just concluding that women's
testimony must always count as less than a man's simply because the scripture
explicitly says so, the "modernist" interprets the scripture by looking at what the
main underlying message or value in the scripture is. And the value you could
find in the passage cited is that witnesses must be reliable for justice to be
done. This is the underlying value, and the claim that women's testimony should
only count as half of a man's is not an eternal value but instead a context-specific
application of that value to a time when women were not given equal training or
practice in financial matters. In times when women are given that training (as
Rahman argues, using interpretations of other passages, they should be), then
that value would imply that women's testimony counts the same as men.
This is an example of what it means to interpret scripture: instead of just
assuming that what's explicitly said should be done should actually be done by
us, we use our own thinking to determine what the underlying message is and
whether and how it applies to us. The explicit message may sometimes apply to
us as it is stated, but other times it might not.   To determine which is which, we
need to interpret.

This illustrates the difference between reading literally and interpreting, but it also
illustrates one reason religions have for saying we should interpret instead of
reading literally. If we were to read literally, we would often mistake context-
specific applications of values for eternal values because we would be assuming
there's no difference. It is hard to see how we could be said to take scripture
seriously if we did that. So, it could be argued that interpreting, rather than
reading literally, is required if we're going to take scripture seriously. We
illustrated this point using one tradition (Islam), but it applies just as well to other
traditions. This is probably enough to show that "because scripture explicitly
says so" is not an enumerative moral reason that even devout believers should
be satisfied with.

But, there are other important problems with reading literally that show even the
devout should reject the strategy of reading literally and should not see "because
scripture explicitly says so" as a good enumerative moral reason. The problem is
that literal readings are unreliable: if we assumed that the explicit message

always applied to us in our current circumstances, we'd end up with lots of guidance that even devout believers have good reason not to follow.[vi] Since it's relevant to Kim Davis's argument, we'll look at the *Bible,* but the same point could be made about scriptures from other traditions.

For just a few examples, consider the explicit guidance in these passages:[vii]

Lev 21:9 – "If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire."

Lev 25:44 – "Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves."

Lev 20:10 – "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death."

Ex 21:20-21 – "Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property."

Mark 10:11-12 – "He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'"

Col 3:22 – "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord."

I Cor 14:35 – "If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."

Let's focus on the passages about slavery. Clearly, even devout people have good reason not to assume that owning slaves is morally permissible for us merely because scripture explicitly says it is. There are many good moral arguments against slavery, such as that it completely disrespects a person's autonomy (their capacity to freely guide their life by their own principles, preferences and decisions) and that it causes massive and avoidable suffering. If we read scripture literally, we'd have to assume that owning slaves is morally permissible. Indeed, many slave owners in the Pre-Civil War American South used "because scripture explicitly says so" to justify their practices, citing some of the passages listed above. The point is that if we shouldn't accept this guidance simply because it is explicitly stated in scripture, then, to be consistent, we can't say that we should accept other guidance (such as the condemnation of gay sex in *Lev*. 18-22 or *Rom* 1:26) merely because it is explicitly stated in scripture.[viii]

So, even for a devout person like Kim Davis, "because scripture explicitly says so" doesn't qualify as a good enumerative moral reason: it doesn't really give us good reason to think that gay and lesbian relationships (or anything else) are right or wrong for us.

The lesson is that the mere fact that scripture explicitly says something is right or wrong does not by itself justify saying it is therefore right or wrong for us. Reading literally does not provide good guidance about what's right, wrong, good or bad for us, even if we're devout. Importantly, this doesn't mean that scripture can't inform a person's moral thinking. After all, if scripture is a tool that can aid in deliberation about morality, it is a tool that can be used in different ways. As with other tools, scripture can be used poorly, as when it is read literally. But, rejecting reading literally leaves it open that we can use the tool in a different way: instead of assuming that the explicit message applies to us and no more thinking is required, we could instead take scripture seriously and think about what the underlying message is and whether and how it applies to us in our current circumstances. If we're using scripture for moral guidance, we can (and should) interpret instead of reading literally.

There are a few important implications of this argument against reading scripture literally that are especially worth noting.

One is that "because scripture explicitly says so" can't get us out of doing hard thinking. If we're going to derive guidance from scripture then we have to interpret, and finding and applying the right interpretation requires applying our moral knowledge: we have to have some grasp of what makes conduct good or bad in order to figure out what the real underlying message of a passage is and how it applies to our current circumstances. Put another way: we need a grasp of explanatory moral reasons to even figure out how to interpret scripture and derive guidance from it.

Importantly, this argument against reading literally also explains why it is unfair to criticize religions on the basis of an explicitly violent passage or because extremists cite explicit passages to justify horrible and violent actions. It is no more fair to criticize Islam, for instance, by citing explicitly violent passages in the *Qur'an* than it is to criticize Christianity on the basis of the many violent passages in the *Bible*. By showing that both scriptures can and should be interpreted, we can show that those who use them to justify violent actions merely based upon some explicit message are using it in a way they should not - they are reading literally. This, we could argue, is not actually taking the scripture seriously, because it is not searching for the real underlying message and thoughtfully applying it our lives.

Exercises: students discuss this in small groups and prepare to share their answers.

8. We've seen an argument that even devout believers should interpret scripture rather than reading it literally, in part because reading scripture literally gives unreliable guidance: it sometimes gives guidance that even devout believers have good reason to reject. This implies that, even if we're devout, we should say that "because scripture explicitly says so" is a bad enumerative reason. ***Discuss this point until everyone thinks they understand it and why it is important. Then, work together to identify at least one argument someone might make in defense of reading scripture literally and write it down in a few clear and precise sentences. Does this argument succeed in defending literal readings from the objections we've been looking at? Why or why not?***

Summarizing lecture:

A defender of literal readings of scripture might have some objections to the argument. To really see if the argument we've been reviewing shows that "because scripture explicitly says so" is not a good enumerative moral reason, we'd need to think of what objections might be raised to it and evaluate them.

One possible objection is: "Shouldn't we interpret sometimes but read literally other times? Wouldn't that allow us to say that 'because scripture explicitly says so' is sometimes enough to justify our beliefs?"

This objection is based on a misunderstanding of the terms we've been using. Given the way we've been using the terms 'reading literally' and 'interpreting,' either you assume that the explicit message is enough by itself and no more thinking is required (that's reading literally), or you don't assume that (that's interpreting). Perhaps the point here might be better stated as this: sometimes the explicit guidance applies to us a stated, and sometimes it does not (because the circumstances are different, or whatever). But, that's something you'd find out by interpreting: by figuring out what the underlying message is and whether and how it applies to us. Sometimes when you interpret you'll find that the explicit message does apply to us as stated, whereas other times you'll find that it does not (perhaps because the explicit message wasn't an eternal value but a value applied to a circumstance that differs in significant ways from our own). But, in either case you're interpreting, not reading literally. If you interpret, you will sometimes decide the explicit message applies to us, but you don't assume it applies to us without any need for further thinking. And, to interpret well, you need to already have a grasp of explanatory moral reasons.

Another objection that might be raised is: "Is critical thinking always good? Can't we just trust what an expert says about how to interpret a scripture or what to do? After all, isn't expertise required to interpret scripture correctly?"

This objection raises an interesting point, but it doesn't get us out of doing some hard thinking for ourselves. Certainly, sometimes we have good reason to look

to experts: when my car breaks, I don't try to fix it myself. And, there are reasons why people might want to consult experts on how to interpret scripture or on what's right or wrong.

But, this can't get you out of doing your own hard thinking. After all, experts disagree, so you'll at least have to figure out whom you should trust. And, part of figuring that out requires knowing how reliable their judgments tend to be. So, you have to do your own thinking and acquire your own moral knowledge to decide if an expert is reliable or not: you have to grasp explanatory moral reasons before you can decide if "because so-and-so says so" is a good enumerative moral reason! Also, think about what is required to be a morally responsible person. If you ask someone why they did something and they just say "because so-and-so told me to," would you think that person is doing what's required to be worthy of praise for their actions? Would that be a good excuse if it turned out they did something wrong? If not, then maybe the lesson is that we might decide as a result of critical thinking that we need to trust some people sometimes who know more than us, but we still have to do critical thinking to determine who is worthy of that trust and when and why.

STEP 4: IMPLICATIONS

Exercise: students discuss this in small groups and then prepare to share their answers.

9. Work together to identify at least one important lesson from our discussion of religion and moral reasons. What have we learned about the kinds of moral reasons we should be searching for? ***Write down your lesson(s) in a clear and precise sentence.***

Summarizing lecture:

We started by looking at two different types of moral reasons: explanatory moral reasons (reasons that explain what makes something good, bad, right or wrong) and enumerative moral reasons (reasons that identify what's good, bad, right or wrong without explaining what makes them so). Getting a grasp of these kinds of reasons – especially explanatory moral reasons – is a challenging but necessary part of making good decisions about how to live and conduct ourselves.

It can be tempting to think things aren't so challenging. We might understandably be drawn to the idea that things are simpler and that merely appealing to the authority of God or scripture can get us the answers we need. But, as we've seen, "because God says so" and "because scripture says so" can't by themselves tell us which conduct is good (bad, right or wrong) or what makes it so, even if we're devout. To find good moral reasons we need to do some hard thinking about what makes conduct good, bad, right or wrong.

This does not mean religion cannot play a role in a person's moral life. The arguments we have looked at are perfectly compatible with the idea that religion informs a person's moral life in important ways: as a source of motivation, solace, and inspiration. And, the arguments leave it open that religious sources like scripture can be useful aids to moral decision-making, but only if they are interpreted rather than read literally. Indeed, the arguments fit with explanations religious traditions themselves give about the relationships between God, scripture, and the appropriate use of human intelligence.

The arguments also have another implication that could be heartening for us all, regardless of whether we're religious or not. It can often seem that productive moral discussions in a pluralistic society like ours are impossible, because everyone is searching for fundamentally different kinds of answers to moral questions: some people want to cite a religious text or authority (and they don't even agree on which ones), and others don't. This can make it seem like we are attempting to play a game where the players all have different ideas about the rules. But, if the arguments we've looked at are good ones, then all of us – whether atheist, agnostic, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, etc. – need to be doing the same kind of thinking to determine what makes conduct good, bad, right or wrong. Perhaps, then, reasonable and productive moral discussion is ours to be had, as long as we put forth the effort.[ix]

CONCLUSION

I have described a skill-based framework for teaching religion and morality in introductory ethics courses. I have tried to demonstrate how this framework teaches generally applicable skills for evaluating moral reasons that can be used to discuss important questions about religion and morality: are "because God says so" and "because scripture explicitly says so" moral reasons that we should be satisfied with even if we're devout?

This framework covers many of the concepts covered in traditional methods for teaching the topic (e.g. those that utilize the Euthyphro Dilemma) but, I have found, does so in a way that helps avoid misperceptions about the nature of the argument and its importance.

There are a variety of ways the framework could be adapted to fit the needs of a particular course, including more advanced courses that want to discuss more sophisticated versions of Divine Command Theory.[x] And, this topic is best followed by instruction and practice in applied ethical reasoning, such as the analysis, evaluation, and development of moral arguments from analogy and moral arguments from principle. But, the framework can play an important role in helping students come away from a discussion of religion and morality not only understanding important points and appreciating important questions but also having acquired important and generalizable skills.

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[i] I'm grateful to Ian Stoner for suggesting these terms to capture the distinction I'm drawing here.

[ii] Alan Blinder and Richard Pérez-Peña, "Kentucky Clark Denies Same-Sex Marriage Licenses, Defying Court," *New York Times*, Sept 1, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/02/us/same-sex-marriage-kentucky-kim-davis.html?_r=0

[iii] For influential or detailed explanations and evaluations of the Euthyphro Dilemma, see James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1999); Mark C. Murphy, "A Trilemma for Divine Command Theory," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (2002): 22–31; Erik J. Wielenberg, *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a helpful overview of possible defenses of Divine Command Theory, see Mark C. Murphy, "Theological Voluntarism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=voluntarism-theological.

[iv] My discussion of the problems with Divine Command Theory owes much to James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 3rd edition. For a helpful baseball analogy similar to my teacher analogy, see Harry Brod, "Euthyphro, Foucault, and Baseball: Teaching the Euthyphro," *Teaching Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2007): 249– 58.

[v] Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 48–49.

[vi] For additional explanations this argument against literal readings of scripture, see J. Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?: A Defense of Homosexuality," in *The Ethical Life*, ed. Shafer-Landau, R. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 368–81; James Rachels, "Ethics and the Bible," *Think* 1, no. 01 (2002): 93–101; A. Weston, *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2012), chap. 3; Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *Morality Without God?* (Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 7.

[vii] All quotations from NIV Bible: Kenneth L. Barker, Donald Burdick, and Donald W. Burdick, *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version* (Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1995). For discussions of the unreliability of some of these and additional passages, see the citations in the previous footnote.
[viii] Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex?"
[ix] For helpful discussion of the ideas in this paper, I would like to thank Ian Stoner and Ruth Swartwood.
[x] For example, Robert Merrihew Adams, "Divine Command Metaethics Modified Again," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 1979, 66–79. Is "because a loving God commands it" an explanatory reason or an enumerative one? Is it an explanatory reason for some moral categories (rightness, wrongness, or moral obligation) but not others (prudential goodness, virtue, or all-things-considered goodness)?