

SUBJECTIVE & OBJECTIVE MORALITY

First, a vocabulary check:

MORALITY – beliefs about what is right and wrong

SUBJECTIVE MORALITY – what's right and wrong is down to you alone – your opinion, your thoughts and feelings, etc.

OBJECTIVE MORALITY – moral law is not simply a matter of opinion; some things really are right and wrong no matter what your opinion

Catholic Teaching

The Catholic Church teaches that morality is *objective*; what is right and wrong is given to human beings by God through three complementary sources:

- an inner awareness of morality (conscience),
- direct revelation of God's law in Holy Scripture (Decalogue, Sermon on the Mount, other teaching),
- the teaching authority of the Church.

1 Read the views in the speech bubbles beside.

a) Which view or views are an example of *objective* morality? Explain.

b) Which view or views are an example of *subjective* morality? Explain.

What's right and wrong comes from within yourself, how you think and feel. Nobody can tell you what's right and what's wrong. (A: Atheist's view)

What's right and wrong comes from Allah, through the Qur'an and the tradition of Muhammad (peace be upon him). (B: Muslim view)

What's right and wrong comes from God, through conscience, the Bible and Church teaching. (C: Catholic view)



2 Read the conversation between two characters, *I and J*.

a) What type of morality (subjective or objective) does each character profess?

Explain how you know.

b) Who wins the argument? Give reasons for your view.

I So is nothing really right or wrong - it's all just your opinion?
J Yes.
I So if I say adultery is wrong or abortion is wrong - it's just an opinion?
J Yes, it's just your opinion. I don't have to believe it.
I What about shoplifting, fare-dodging, swearing, perjury, gossip, vandalism?
J Just your opinion.
I What about abusing the environment?
J I personally believe that *is* wrong.
I But it's just your opinion?
J Yes, but most people agree with me.
I What about child abuse or beating up the elderly and robbing them? Are these really wrong or just my opinion?
J Well, in my opinion, these are very wrong.
I But someone like you believes it's just an opinion that these things are wrong. Others can accept or reject the opinion.
J Yes, but the law would stop such people from abusing children or mugging the elderly.
I So the law obviously thinks some things are right and other things wrong?
J Yes, I suppose so, but laws change.
I Do you really believe that there's no such thing as true right or wrong?
J I believe statements about right and wrong are just personal views - it's just your opinion.
I Then the statement 'it's just your opinion' is just an opinion I can accept or reject?
J I suppose so.
I I reject it, then.

