

# Week 2 Discussion: Religion and Ethics

26 unread replies. 8484 replies.

## Required Resources

Read/review the following resources for this activity:

- ▣ extbook: Chapters 3, 4
- ▣ Lesson
- ▣ Minimum of 1 scholarly source (in addition to the textbook)

## Initial Post Instructions

St. Augustine in the 5th Century held that we are free to make choices in life. This is the idea of free will. It may seem at first glance odd for a religious thinker to say that we have free will. After all, if God exists, then God created all things. God knows already what we will do. God can cause anything to occur. If we cause things to occur, that seems to be a limitation on the power of God and not make God all-powerful.

There are also religion traditions that say that we have no free will. There are some theologians in Islam who seem to suggest that is true. In order for this line of reasoning to hold true, one would need to believe free will is an illusion and that we have no control over how we live our lives, but rather that we are puppets moving and acting due to God's will and the powers of destiny and fate. And if this then in the case, how can we possibly be responsible for our actions?

The considerations above show us to what degree our religious beliefs can shape us. For instance, someone who believes in free will may experience way more guilt than someone who believes we don't have free will and thus aren't responsible for the choices (and consequences) of the actions we take.

Personal struggles with religion and ethics occur in many places, including in the healthcare arena. Consider the following: You are a nurse in a hospital. A 12 year-old was brought to the hospital by an ambulance. The parents have just arrived at the hospital. This 12 year-old has lost a large amount of blood and requires a transfusion. The parents happen to be members of a religion that believes that blood transfusions are immoral. They want to remove the child from the hospital and prevent the transfusion even if it means the death of the child. You have to decide whether or not you will participate in an action that violates the will of the parents and aid in providing blood for the child. If you choose to participate, and even if you are able to legally justify it, you have to think about the distress you are creating for the parents. If you refuse to aid here, you may be subject to retaliation from the hospital. What is the moral thing for the nurse to do here?

## Initial Post Instructions

For the initial post, address the following questions:

1. What would a divine command ethicist say is the moral thing to do here? Why would they say that? Do you agree with the divine command ethics? Why or why not?
2. Evaluate what a natural law ethicist would say is right to do. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
3. Given what you said are the right things to do, what would an emotivist say about your positions and judgments? What role does subjectivity play here in determining what is ethical?