

## MORAL THEORIES AT A PARALLEL GLANCE\*

	“Supernatural” Subjectivism “God”-based, Faith-based Morality	Social Subjectivism Consensus-based Morality	Personal Subjectivism Whim-based Morality (False Egoism)	Rational Egoism / Ayn Rand’s Objectivism Life-based, Reason-based Morality (True Egoism)
<b>Standard of Truth and Moral Value</b>	God’s will is the standard of truth and moral value. Whatever God (or His earthly agents) says you should do is what you should do. You know this by having faith.	Social convention or consensus is the standard of truth and moral value. Whatever the collective says you should do is what you should do. You know this by asking the group or taking a poll.	Personal opinion or desire is the standard of truth and moral value. Whatever you want to do is what you should do. You know this by feeling it.	Perceptual reality is the standard of truth; human life is the standard of moral value; each individual’s own life is his own ultimate value. Whatever you rationally conclude will promote your life and long-term happiness is what you should do. You know this by observing reality, conceptualizing your observations, and using logic.
<b>Moral Values</b>	Moral values are whatever God wills them to be. The most important value is God’s will, which you must revere above all else, seek to know, and unconditionally obey.	Moral values are whatever society deems them to be. The most important value is the collective will, which you must revere above all else, seek to know, and unconditionally obey.	Moral values are whatever you want them to be. The most important value is your feelings, which you should revere above all else and use as your guide to action.	Moral values are the things man needs in order to live and prosper as a human being. The most fundamental of these values is reason, man’s only means of knowledge and his basic means of living. If you want to live fully as a human being, you must hold your reasoning mind as your highest value and your only guide to action.
<b>Virtues (Moral Actions)</b>	Moral virtues are whatever God says they are. Among them are having faith in God’s existence, obeying His will, sacrificing yourself or others for His purposes, and being humble before His greatness.	Moral virtues are whatever society says they are. Among them are accepting the collective will, obeying its dictates, sacrificing yourself or others for the greater good of the group, and being humble before its greatness.	Moral virtues are whatever you want them to be. Among them are worshipping your whims, doing whatever you feel like doing, and ignoring any facts that suggest you should do otherwise.	Moral virtues are rational, principled actions in service of your life and long-term happiness. Among them are thinking, producing, refusing to pretend that facts are other than they are, granting people what they deserve, and being ambitious in pursuit of your life-serving values.
<b>Human Sacrifice</b>	If God says you should sacrifice yourself or others, that’s what you should do. Human sacrifice is good if God says so.	If society says you should sacrifice yourself or others, that’s what you should do. Human sacrifice is good if the group says so.	If you want to sacrifice yourself or others, that’s what you should do. Human sacrifice is good if you want it to be.	Human sacrifice is contrary to the requirements of human life, thus it is immoral. Regardless of what any person, group, or alleged God says, feels, or demands, human sacrifice <i>as such</i> —whether sacrifice of oneself to others or of others to oneself—is morally wrong.
<b>Use of Force</b>	You should obey God—so, if you refuse, His earthly agents may properly force you to obey.	You should comply with the social consensus—so, if you refuse, the collective may properly force you to comply.	You should do whatever you want to do—so, if you want to use force against others, you should.	To the extent that physical force is used against a person, it stops him from acting on his judgment, his basic means of living; thus, the use of initiatory physical force against people is immoral. Physical force may be used only in retaliation and only against those who initiate or threaten its use.
<b>Rights</b>	Although they are not mentioned in religious scripture, rights come from God and can be rescinded by Him or His earthly agents; thus, your basic right is the right to obey God’s or His agents’ commands.	Rights are granted by and can be rescinded by society or the government. You are subordinate to the desires and needs of the group, and you have a moral duty to conform accordingly.	Rights are whatever you want them to be. If you want to use force or commit fraud or the like against others, then you have that right.	Rights are factual requirements of human life in a social context. Each individual is an end in himself, not a means to the ends of others; thus, you have a moral right to act on your own judgment and to keep and use the product of your effort—so long as you do not violate the same right of others.
<b>Social System</b>	The proper social system consists of rule by men via theocracy.	The proper social system consists of rule by men via socialism, communism, fascism, democracy, anarchy.	The proper social system consists of rule by men via monarchy, oligarchy, anarchy.	The proper social system consists of rule of law via pure, laissez-faire capitalism, in which the sole purpose of government is to protect rights.

\*Read the accompanying article, “Basic Moral Theories Essentialized,” at [www.TheObjectiveStandard.com](http://www.TheObjectiveStandard.com). Copyright ©2014 The Objective Standard; this chart may be distributed electronically or in print as long as the text, including this copyright and permission notice, is not altered.