

Morality

Good and evil are believed to both be related to suffering. What exactly is 'good' and what exactly makes an action 'wrong'?

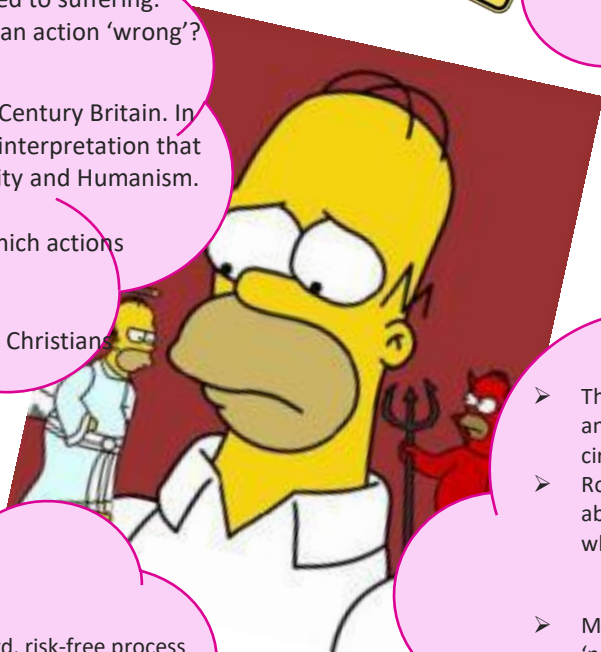
These questions play an important role in 21st Century Britain. In addition, there is a wide diversity of belief and interpretation that exist within Christianity and between Christianity and Humanism.

Morality

Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.

Conscience

Inner voice telling us right from wrong. Christians believe it is given by God.

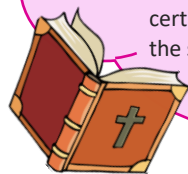


- Making moral decisions is not a straight-forward, risk-free process
- We use our **conscience**, which helps us to make the right choice
- Our **free will** enables us to make decisions and choices that are our own
- Past **experiences** teach us the rightness and wrongness of our choices
- The **law** offers strict guidance for our behaviour, to maintain peace, order and harmony. Breaking these laws can lead to punishment, fines, community service and prison.



How do people make moral decisions?

- People consult **religious leaders** or community elders for advice and guidance as it is accepted that these people have the experience and wisdom to offer advice
- Religious people look towards their religious teachings and **sacred texts** before making decisions, e.g. the Bible
- Some look to moral exemplars, such as **Martin Luther King Jnr** for guidance
- Moral decision-making is difficult because each case and decision is **unique**. This is called **Situation Ethics** – the idea that certain behaviour may be right or wrong, depending on the situation.



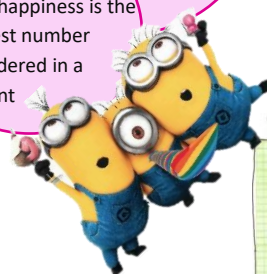
What is 'wrong'?

Any act or pattern of behaviour which **goes against accepted moral, religious or ethical codes** is considered to be 'wrong'

Much like the term, 'good', 'wrong' is a relative term and can be **situational**. For example, what is 'wrong' in one situation might be 'right' in another, such as stealing. Stealing is 'wrong' if it is out of personal greed or for financial gain. However, few people would condemn or punish a parent who steals a loaf of bread to feed their starving children.



Utilitarians believe that we should make choices based on how happy it makes me or other people. The choice that produces the most happiness is the correct one because it is affecting the greatest number of people. Punishment should also be considered in a utilitarian way, i.e. which punishment will cause the most happiness in society?



Absolute Morality

- This is when a person has a principle or a moral rule, such as 'do not kill', and believes that it is wrong to kill in all situations, whatever the context or circumstance
- Roman Catholics and Quakers are examples of Christian denominations who are absolutist in their moral values (if it is a moral rule, is it always a valid rule, whatever the situation).

Relative Morality

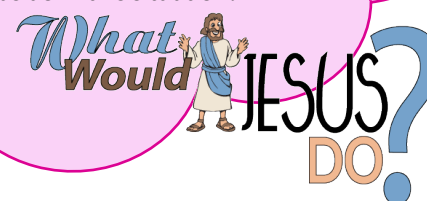
- Moral principles can be adapted in certain situations. E.g. the principle to 'not kill' can be adapted in times of war or in self-defence. This might be because death in war, for example, might reduce suffering in the long-term
- Protestant churches like the Church of England would be described as relativist in their approach to morality
- Humanists follow a relative moral approach to judging situations and moral dilemmas



WWJD

The WWJD movement (What Would Jesus Do?) was started by Evangelical Christians in America in 1990s. People wear bracelets to remind them of their Christian beliefs and to prompt them to make decisions that will be in keeping with the life and teachings of Jesus.

If facing a moral dilemma, Christians would ask: *What would Jesus do in this situation?*



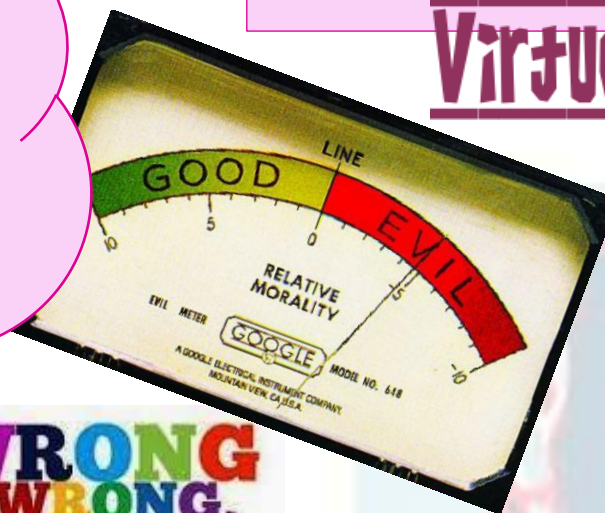
Virtues are qualities thought of as good, right and honest. Examples are:

1. **Chastity** (not having sex until marriage)
2. **Temperance** (not drinking alcohol)
3. **Charity** (volunteering time and effort)
4. **Diligence** (careful and persistent effort)
5. **Patience** (acceptance or tolerance of problems)
6. **Kindness** (compassion towards others)
7. **Humility** (modest view of your own importance)



Practising these virtues is believed to keep people safe from the temptation to commit sin.

Virtue Ethics



WRONG is **WRONG**, even if everyone is doing it.
RIGHT is **RIGHT**, even if no one is doing it.

