

Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Heather Salazar
Main Theses, Week 10

Williams: "God, Morality, and Prudence"

1. "A central difficulty with this [the idea that morality follows from God] lies in the question of which properties of God are supposed to justify the claim that we ought to satisfy his expectations." (63)
2. "So, taking this all together [the Kantian argument about moral motivation and God], we reach the conclusion that any appeal to God in this connection either adds nothing at all, or it adds the wrong sort of thing." (be sure to understand all parts of this argument) (65)
3. All moral theories must distinguish between selfish actions and those that take the interests of others into account. (65-66)
4. "[I]t will not follow that what he [the selfishly interested man who gives to charity] does is no better than what is done by the simply selfish man.
5. Some say that "it must be impossible from the moral point of view to prefer one to the other." (67)
6. But this is "morally absurd." (67)
7. Explain Kant and Hume's different methods to incorporate people's motivations into an account of moral action. (67-68)
8. "[T]here is certainly no problem (as there should not be) about why a man who is concerned about others may not also be reasonably concerned about himself. (68-69)
9. "On a Kantian emphasis, however, this suddenly emerges as a problem." (explain the problem with accepting all three of the Kantian theses). (69)
10. The religious moralist then can act morally when he does something from a motivation to "feel for the sufferings of each other" and even if he acts to avoid hellfire, "there is a special reason why his action, though prudential, are not selfish." (70)
11. "Some of our decent actions come not from that motive which Christians misrepresent as our loving everybody, but just from our loving somebody." (71)
12. The religious moralist "may have to be careful about saying that this is an attitude towards God which anyone who knows what God is *ought* to have." (71-72)
13. Even saying that anyone who knows God will have it "is still not enough." (72)
14. "If God existed, there might well be special, and acceptable, reasons for subscribing to morality." (72)