

Moralism: Religion, Reactionary Politics, and Authoritarianism

By Postliterate

Source: <https://medium.com/@postliterate/moralism-religion-reactionary-politics-and-authoritarianism-ef56e44fba09>

Radical human expressions of negative moralism — that is, of moral exclamations at things perceived to be negative based upon those things' transgression of underlying moral principles — are not true altruistic expressions whose true intention and motivation is to set things right again. In other words, the fervent moralist who proclaims the robber or the murderer to be wicked and vile does not truly do so because of a staunch inclination to see his moral principles flourish (morals which, in his view, he formulated in order to set the world on the path of maximizing good and minimizing suffering), despite what he may say. In essence, it is because he is terrified of the image of himself. This image of himself can be either a figurative or a literal one: figurative in that the moralist may be motivated by the horror which overcomes him knowing it is possible for him to become like the robber or the murderer, and literal in that the moralist may himself be a robber or murderer and is terrified of himself. That is to say, the moralist is either motivated by the image of what he may become, or of what he already is. More often than many believe (even the moralists themselves), the latter seems to be true.

In truth, then, morality is a terribly selfish thing. It proclaims out in anger at how other people dare attempt to do that which the moralist is afraid he might do (or is already doing). The moralist is afraid of himself, and so projects that fear onto others. However, through his self-

aggrandizing, deception, and deep conviction he elevates himself both in his personal self and even societal status, allowing him to drown those nagging parts of him which he is so afraid of and escaping personal suffering. How privileged it is to be a moralist, not just in his well-developed talent to escape from himself but also in the status and privilege he is awarded in many societies! He fills his church with eager young hearts who chuck him dollars feverishly; in other societies he is given particular political status as well. He may, if he is stringent in his lies enough, continue all the way to the grave with this sense of personal happiness.

Why is the moralist so happy? Because he can deny everything about himself that which makes most others suffer. Human existence is fundamentally suffering; the human is constantly filled with needs he knows he can never fulfill, and with his constant drive to desire new and more elaborate wants, he contorts himself into a being not just alienated from society but even from himself. In short, he becomes a hypocrite, and to most this reality is quite vexing. We are constantly coping with our own existence, our backs breaking under the weight of such an odious existence; as such, we are so grossly imperfect, and in fact terrible and feckless. But the moralist anoints himself the privilege of escaping this pain; he takes the focus away from his dreadful self and projects it onto others. How easy it is to make a fuss about how terrible, contradictory, and hypocritical others are when one never feels the need to turn this criticism onto himself!

What of those which follow the moralist, drinking deep in his words and applying his ideas? They are motivated by many things, most notably a sense of identity and community and all the motivations that motivate the moralist as well. The follower of the moralist too wants to deny himself, to make himself believe he can become that which he can never be — a “moral person” — in order to bring himself out of his personal suffering, and to project his suffering onto others.

Max Stirner was able to peer into the mind of man and saw a machine far too complex to ever be fully described or quantified. To attempt to glue oneself to the label of a “moral person”, and to attempt to ever fully live up

to that ideal, was ultimately futile. The individual is a complex system: a complex mesh of desires, many of which conflict. Thus, to attempt to constrict oneself to a single system of action is impossible and can only be played out through delusion. This is the state of the moralist: an individual whose deep-seeded worry surrounding knowledge of this fact results in a response of vigorous projection of these fears onto others, which can also serve to fool oneself into imagining himself as immune to his criticism of others — for, after all, if he found himself in the position of the judge and jury, he must already be morally better off than the so-called criminal being judged. It allows him to forget about himself...

The question now becomes: why are moralists scared of becoming certain things, or otherwise scared of their own doings? This is a much deeper question than can be discussed in the scope of this essay as it involves analysis of societal constructs and psychoanalysis. Suffice it to say that man, motivated by his egoism, in different environments will come to find different things to be in his benefit. In some societies he may declare himself king, in others he may make himself a slave owner; however, the principle of egoism remains the same. With the combined egoism of others who possess unique perspectives from coming from different environments, larger forces of societal constructs are formed. This, combined with the biological constitution of every person, creates new men born into certain customs and inclinations which lead him to certain places. He may use his intellect or he may not; he is always a unique biological configuration from all the rest and may find himself following different philosophical schools of thoughts (consciously or unconsciously) than others. Then, his beliefs and deep-rooted convictions, inclinations, and aversions lead him to develop a personal morality. If he is to become a moralist, he will use this morality to great lengths in ways detailed previously. Oftentimes the truly deep-rooted convictions are ones which are barely visible to the conscious mind and which are often sexual in nature (hence the relevance of psychoanalysis). These elements and their subsequent morality form what the moralist is most afraid of. However, because humans are

far too complicated and are constantly struggling to remain in any reasonable condition, the moralist will break his own morals or see himself too close to breaking them; as such he will respond with further militant outward moralism.

What do I have in mind when I speak of “the moralist”? The moralist is the religious man, from the christian to the ascetic, the political authoritarian who demands the world be crafted in his own image alone, the socially reactionary who demand people conform to their idea of “correct,” and any person who holds fervent desires to force everyone into the image of what you personally want them to be. The realm of politics, even more so with religion, is the battleground for moralists. They all collectivize in these realms and shout at each other until the sun goes down. Politics is particularly interesting because it sees the appearance of the counteracting force against this moralizing: that of the liberatory desire to allow people freedom to pursue their own personal wills. The particularly insecure individuals will gravitate toward the more staunch moralism, as they project their fears onto others, demanding they all be what he wants them to be. The more confident ones may instead insist on the freedom to escape these pre-planned designs for how people are allegedly supposed to behave. To use Nietzsche’s term, the *Übermensch* here is the one who escapes this moralist nonsense and comes into his own, he who realizes his own inner struggle and deals with it himself, he who becomes master of himself and not servant to the morality these charlatans espouse.

As a postscript, it must be remarked that not any attempt to say what individuals should or should not do is invalid. Even the anarchist Émile Pouget who proclaimed, “*the true wisdom for all would be for everyone to be himself,*” [1] understood the restrictions imposed by life in a society intended to function properly. As such, he understood the necessity for individuals to not intrude too far into the lives of others, and things of that nature. (The Accused Anarchists, of which Pouget was a member, stated in their 1883 *Declaration to the Tribunal of Lyons*: “[W]e demand the right and the means for all human beings to do whatever pleases them... without

any limit but that imposed by their natural possibilities and the needs of their neighbors...”) What I speak of when I speak of “moralists” are those who are radically fervent in their desire to force the world into their own image, rather than leave human beings alone. In a sense, the larger the moralist one is, the more the principles of insecurity and projection detailed previously apply.

[1] Émile Pouget, *Revolutionary Bread*