

As you study #2563 p.2 (which is also #545), think of the different **goals** of different persons-cultures-civilizations.

The following eight sentences correspond, number by number, with the eight "ways of being religious" & moral: The goal of (1) is communion with & in God, "all creatures of our God and King" singing praises & rejoicing together. This includes "nature," but I didn't draw a line to it because it's a subordinate biblical theme....The goal of (2) is the human community sustained through myth & ritual....Of (3), the goal is harmonious, balanced living through conformity to the cosmic law...(4W)'s goal is spiritual freedom through theocentric discipline, & (4E)'s is spiritual freedom through psychocentric discipline....The goal of (5) is to attain an integrated self through creative human interaction....Achievement of human rights through political & economic action is the goal of (6)....(7)'s goal is the new life through a creative-sustainable relationship between the biosphere & technology....And (8)'s goal is enjoyment of the full life through sensuous experience....In my diagrams, in each case the emphasis is indicated by the solid line(s)....While my brief notes give some clues as to how the "ways" relate to the world's religions, the boundaries of the latter do not neatly correspond with the incidence of the former. The "ways" are dynamic-existential, the religions are (in the broad sense) institutional....Here's an exercise that'll help you experience how the "ways" are related to some traditional **virtues**: the cardinal (wisdom or prudence, courage or fortitude, temperance or moderation, justice or righteousness) & theological (faith, hope, charity or love), patience, humility, acceptance. While thinking about each "way" in succession, ask yourself *Which of these virtues would this "way" encourage/discourage?* Then do the same vis-a-vis "the seven deadly sins": pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth. When you've done the exercise, take (legitimate!) pride in your having been "doing ethics," ie thinking systematically about morality (a synonym for virtue or goodness). Being ethical is making informed decisions for the right & the good in each situation & taking the consequences of living those decisions. The exercise lets you practice being ethical in each of the "ways" as you imagine yourself living each in turn.....The exercise should not take you more than two hours a day for one week. Take notes!

Cultures differ fundamentally in their goals. In the Bible's morality, the major goal-strand is **the will of God** (the Jewish emphasis), the minor goal-strand is **the Good** (the Greek emphasis, beginning to influence the Jews as early as three centuries before Christianity). Let's sketch the Greek: (1) The Good is truth, & we get at it by courageous following of lines of questioning (Socrates). (2) The Good is the religioethical dimension of truth; ideas are the really real, & the Good is the highest, most important idea (Plato, a student of Socrates). (3) Education is the process of in-forming human life with the forms ideas take (Plato) or essentially have (Aristotle, a student of Plato). (4) The heart of education is the discovery & practice of the Good. How? Many ways, but the Socratic method (honest-courageous response to chains of questions) is the baseline....Socrates, as you might guess, is the "Jesus" of this Greek tradition, which has seen many manifestations since 4th-c. BC/BCE Athens (Platonism [& neoPlatonism], Aristotelianism [& Medieval Scholasticism], Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, the Enlightenment, the French & American Revolutions).

Many questions bridge between these, the two fundamental goals of Christian & Western civilization. For our course, the most important one is this: *If the Good can be revered, pursued, & achieved without God, why bother with God?* Can't we have morality, ethics, the good life, the good society, without religion? First, notice the question-&-answer implied in the question. What's implied is this, that yes is the answer to the question, Can the Good be revered, pursued, & achieved without God, without religion? Problem: History's answer to the question is no. Philosophy's answer is probably not. Certainly not is the Bible's answer. Under the name of Immanuel Kant, we'll have a look at the most important tradition aiming to establish the good life, the good society, on morality alone. But we need first to attend to the first paragraph (above).