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1. Because this keeps coming up, here's a brief thread about how we think and talk about religion and morality and why it matters. I've made many of these points before, but I'd like to try to collect them into a (hopefully) coherent thread. ■
2. I can't speak for other religions, but it's not uncommon to find definitional arguments about what is or isn't legitimate/authentic Judaism.
3. These arguments can refer to practices (what's required or forbidden), ideologies (what positions are valid/invalid), groups (inclusion or exclusion), or even over the Jewish identity of an individual.
4. In response to these arguments - which often boil down to "is not" vs. "is so" - I often joke, "If only Judaism came with rule books to help sort these things out."
5. The "humor" is that Judaism obviously has many such rule books that are neither in heaven nor across the sea such that we can easily test claims against them.

In reality, things aren't that simple.

6. As others often respond, one question to consider is *which* rule book to use? As much as Judaism is known for its copious canon, it's also known for its countless disagreements over fundamental issues.
7. Whether for theological or interpersonal reasons, you'll find several people arguing that no one has the right (read: authority) to reject someone else's Judaism.

That is to say, it's wrong to say, "X isn't Judaism."

8. I've discussed elsewhere that everyone has some "red line" about where the boundaries of Judaism are and that we're really arguing over the placement over the boundaries rather than the existence of boundaries.

See below for one example.

<https://t.co/9Li5PgnokL>

9. But setting that issue aside, what I'd like to focus on here is the parallel of religious relativism to moral relativism. Here's how the late Gilbert Harmon succinctly defines moral relativism from Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity.

<https://t.co/DXPI1vTZYb>

I am going to argue for a similar claim about moral right and wrong. That is, in my contribution to this book I am going to defend *moral relativism*. I am going to argue that moral right and wrong (good and bad, justice and injustice, virtue and vice, etc.) are always relative to a choice of moral framework. What is morally right in relation to one moral framework can be morally wrong in relation to a different moral framework. And no moral framework is objectively privileged as the one true morality.

10. The parallel with the religious rhetoric described above is that even if each "framework" of Judaism has its own rules, its authority is limited to its internal scope and can't be imposed on those who operate w/a diff framework.

11. But what I find interesting is that in my experience most of the people I encounter who embrace religious relativism reject it entirely when it comes to issues of morality.

12. People have very strong sincerely held beliefs about morality and we disagree over fundamental moral issues. Someone w/a diff framework can think they're wrong, but that's only bec they're operating within a diff framework.

13. To put it plainly, even though Judaism has literal canonical rule books defining its parameters (to some degree, anyway) it is wrong to say "X isn't Jewish."

But regarding morality which has no such canonical rule books, it's praiseworthy (or required) to say "X isn't moral"

14. And lest people start throwing out examples where "everyone" agrees X is immoral, let me say that there is no narrative, context, or rationalization thought couldn't find some justification for anything, or at least be constructed as moral w/in a competing framework

15. I wouldn't exactly call this hypocrisy as much as cognitive dissonance bec I don't think many people *really* think through their moral and religious ideologies (at least not as an exercise in confirmation bias)

16. But I do think people *should* think about these things more, *especially* if they're going to castigate others or otherwise try to coerce people into action or inaction.

17. My uncorroborated conjecture is that at least subconsciously people pick up on the dissonance, see that it's normal, and will use it to their advantage (however defined).

18. I've said before that people like telling other people what to do a whole lot more than they like being told what to do.

I've generally found this to be equally true for both morality and religion (depending on the respective framework).

19. I know this is a big ask for Twitter, but I guess what I'm really asking for is for more people to take the time and really try figuring out these big questions and appropriately adjust how they talk to others about such things.

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