

<b>Four Sources of Moral Knowledge</b>	<b>Pope Benedict XVI's [Josef Ratzinger's] Terminology<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Danger of Understanding this Source Improperly?</b>	<b>Understanding this Source Rightly Involves:</b>
<i>Reason</i>	Reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking that the only capacity of reason is calculating the most efficient means to satisfy preference.</li> <li>- Moral knowledge is objective in the sense that truth is not dependent on the subject, but it requires that we go beyond material objects.</li> <li>- "Pathologies of reason"<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledging that any proper understanding of authentic human goods requires a reference to a transcendent dimension (that is, God as the standard by which all human projects must be judged).</li> <li>- Technical expertise about reality (of scientists, even theologians) requires a complementary witness to the will of God (bishops and the whole Church).</li> </ul>
<i>Experience</i>	Conscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking that experience is normative apart from its connection to a community which challenges one's self interested justifications.</li> <li>- Conscience does express the law of God within experience, but it must be well-educated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human freedom is real (that is, the subjective experience of free choice is not an illusion masking determinism), but it can only be understood properly in relation to the real end (as opposed to the self-justifying, sinful ends) of the human.</li> <li>- This requires differentiating true conscience as the will of God within from its semblances (the superego or absolute subjective freedom).</li> </ul>
<i>Scripture</i>	Will of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking that one can know the will of God on one's own, apart from how this has been expressed in the life of a believing community.</li> <li>- Thinking that one can know the will of God apart from any rational argumentation, such that it can become the mask of authority rather than authentic witness.</li> <li>- "Pathologies of religion"<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledging that the will of God rather than personal preference determines morality (in that sense, morality is objective [related to something outside the human subject's desires] rather than subjective).</li> <li>- Each of the other sources of moral knowledge is legitimate only to the degree that they reflect God's will. Scripture only reveals God's will when interpreted properly (which requires the community and the bishop as its guardian).</li> </ul>
<i>Tradition</i>	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking that it is only the rules or behaviors of a community at the present time (its <i>mores</i>) that serves as a source for moral knowledge. Rather it is the community's witness to the will of God through time that counts.</li> <li>- Rules alone, or concepts, rather than the community's total form of life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The community reflects experience, but it is not a collection of different normative experiences. The community rather provides the standard form through which we should experience all things.</li> <li>- The bishop is that member of the Church entrusted with guarding its memory, and witnessing to the faith of the people.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> From Josef Ratzinger, "Bishops, Theologians and Morality" in Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, ed. *Introduction to Christian Ethics: A Reader* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 359-372.

<sup>2</sup> From Josef Ratzinger, "What Keeps the World Together: The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State" in *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Crossroad/San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), p. 31-44.