

The truth of the statement, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted," is that, if human existence is not constituted somehow, prior to and independently of human decisions, everything *is* permitted.

Clearly, one does not have to be a theist, at least in the ordinary acceptance of "theism," in order to deny that everything is permitted. But one does have to affirm, in some way or other, that human existence is constituted prior to itself and from beyond itself, or beyond the decisions of any and all human beings, collectively as well as individually. Without making this affirmation, one could not deny that "everything is permitted"—or, at any rate, would be powerless to explain why this implication is not to be drawn.

December 1992; rev. 16 November 2008