



BASED ON A TRUE STORY

MOLLY'S GAME

MOVIE
MOMENTS

Nick and Carol Pollard from EthosMedia.org share thought-provoking reflections on the latest films.

A higher purpose?

The real Molly Bloom, whose story is told in *Molly's Game*, says that despite her power and wealth she felt 'spiritually bankrupt'. She was successfully running high-stakes poker games in which millions of dollars changed hands. She was popular with the rich and famous. She had fast cars, shopping sprees, and more cash than most other twenty-somethings could ever dream of. But, she says, 'my definitions of success and ambition were off'.



If you are a fan of Aaron Sorkin's screenwriting (*A Few Good Men*, *The West Wing*, *Steve Jobs* etc) then you will love *Molly's Game* where, for the first time, he also directs the screenplay he has written. This enables him to dig deeply into Molly's character and to raise questions that are helpfully left hanging in the air. One such is whether morality is anything more than psychology.

Molly (played brilliantly by Jessica Chastain) is a complex character. She runs a game in which experienced regulars beat naive new punters, but she also counsels players to get out before they lose too much. She won't collect bad debts from people who can't afford it, and is thus forced into the position of operating illegally by taking a percentage of the pot. She resists dishing the dirt on players in order to protect their lives and preserve her reputation.

So, how does she decide right from wrong? Is there any objective basis for her ethics beyond her personal experience? It is significant that much of the action is framed between two arguments with her father (played by Kevin Costner), a psychotherapist, in which she resists psychoanalytical explanations for behaviour.



Reflecting on her life, as now told on the screen, the real Molly Bloom says 'I'm not going down the road again where I sell my soul... I'd like to use that skill set for a higher purpose.' Perhaps this engaging film might also help many of us to seek an ultimate purpose for our lives, and an objective basis for morality beyond our individual experience.

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EthosMedia.org provides free resources to help people explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through the latest feature films.

