



Session 4:

The Moral Argument for God's existence

Emergence Summer Sessions, 2026

The Existence of God



Moral arguments for God's existence

seek to establish the existence of God by arguing that his existence is necessary, or the best explanation, for certain moral facts.



Moral arguments for God's existence do not
mean that people who do not believe in God don't do
moral good.



Objective Moral Values and Duties



Values

Things that possess positive or negative worth.



Duties

Things that we are obligated to either do or refrain from doing.



Objective Moral Values and Duties



Objective Moral Values and Duties
are grounded in God.



Objective



Objective moral truth:

“Facts according to which some actions and motivations are right or wrong independently of whether anybody believes it to be so.”

David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *God and Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 61.



Moral Realism

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“It was wrong to kill six million Jews in the holocaust.”



Moral Realism



Why should we think Moral Realism is true?

- We experience moral judgments in ways we do not experience personal taste.



AN ITALIAN IS FORCED TO WATCH THE
FIRST TIME PINEAPPLE IS ADDED TO A
PIZZA

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 1924



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- You cannot affirm moral progress unless moral realism is true.



Despite differences, there is profound moral agreement across diverse independent cultures in the world.

“Any argument for moral skepticism will be based upon premises which are less obvious than the existence of objective moral values themselves.”

Louise Antony, debate, Umass, Amherst, April 10, 2008.



Questions



The Primary Objection to Moral Realism:

Evolution and social conditioning have hardwired our minds to think like this.





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Not everything we think can be explained by evolution is rightly explained by evolution.

“... their apparent assumption that the genes have human behavior and culture reined-in on a sort of leash. As Dennet wryly puts it, the fact that tribesmen have everywhere and always thrown their spears pointy-end first does not suggest a ‘pointy-end-first gene.’ Many such traits are instead to be attributed to ‘the general nonsupidity of the species.’”



Mark D. Linville, “The Moral Argument,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 399, citing Daniel Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 122.

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The Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism



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If both evolution and naturalism are true, then we have low
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The dilemma: Moral nihilism
 or
 Moral skepticism?



Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways



Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways

The First Way: Deductive Argument



Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways

The First Way: Deductive Argument

Premise 1: Everything Walt's wife cooks is delicious.

Premise 2: The stir fry I ate last Monday was cooked by Walt's wife.

Conclusion: Therefore, the stir fry I ate last Monday was delicious.



Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways

The First Way: Deductive Argument

Premise 1: If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.

Premise 2: Objective moral values and duties do exist.

Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.





Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways

The First Way: Deductive Argument

Premise 1: If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.

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Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.



“The fact that theists can enlist such unlikely allies does not mean that the moral argument for God’s existence is sound, but it does suggest that the argument is not obviously question-begging, since both premises are sometimes accepted by (different) non-believers.”



C. Stephen Evans, “Moral Arguments for the Existence of God,” in
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-arguments-god/>.

Constructing a Moral Argument: Two Ways

The Second Way: Abductive Argument (argument from the best explanation)



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The Second Way: Abductive Argument (argument from the best explanation)

God is by far the best way to explain moral reality. In particular, four aspects of it:

- All human beings have intrinsic value.
- All human beings have moral obligations.
- All human beings should be held accountable for their moral decisions.
- All human beings possess moral knowledge.



IOAK

Intrinsic value

Moral Obligations

Moral Accountability

Moral Knowledge

