



## Does Morality Point to God?

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That's a bizarre topic of conversation, I thought as we sat down to talk over coffee. My atheist friend had just commented, 'Nothing much would change whether God exists or not, would it? I mean, there would still be good and bad, right and wrong.'

This one question led us into hours of exploration of one subject; **does objective morality require the existence of a god?**

Spanning history, the argument from morality has been supported by such great names as Immanuel Kant, C.S. Lewis and more recently William Lane Craig. It has enjoyed a lot of change over the centuries, but now philosophers have managed to distil it down to one simple argument[1]:

§ Objective moral values exist

§ Objective moral values require the existence of a god

§ Therefore, a God exists

It will become clear that this argument does not take us to the complete picture of the God of the Christian faith, but it does propel us some of the way along that road, towards our destination. This is what I hope to discover by the end of our investigation; a personal being, to whom we owe an obligation, and whose very essence is 'good'. This, I think, would be deserving of the label 'god'.

First, it is important to know what we mean by 'Objectivism'. Essentially there are two views in ethics: morality is either 'Objective' or 'Relative'.

'Objectivism' is the idea that right and wrong are true whether we believe them to be or not. They aren't dependent upon us or any changeable

thing. For instance, if we take objectivism, 'Torturing babies just for fun is wrong' is objectively true whether we believe it to be or not. Even if everyone was brainwashed into thinking it is morally right, torturing babies just for fun would still be plain wrong.

'Relativism' on the other hand, is the complete rejection of objectivism. At its core is the idea that all moral statements are grounded purely in the whim and individual taste of each person or culture.

But does relativism work? Hypothetically, one culture may think that torturing babies just for fun is right, and another that it is wrong. Under relativism, both views are equally valid, and equally true or false. If one society changed their behaviour, they could not have progressed morally because there is no unchangeable measure by which to test their values. They have simply altered their moral outlook, and nothing more. There is no value-added because there is no value. We cannot tell a baby-torturer that what they do is wrong, and they should stop. Their torturing is just as morally acceptable as our non-torturing. There is no logical reason why they should change.

Although many people like Relativism at first, as soon as we go beyond face-value, drastic and terrifying problems emerge. Baby torturers become as saintly as child-carers, Hitler becomes as morally acceptable as Mother Teresa, and Relativism becomes ridiculous.[2]

But, we can go on from here, it seems that relativists render themselves incapable of holding moral discussions. For, what does a conversation on morality consist of? It is simply examining and evaluating different ethical theories, or options in a moral dilemma. But when all is equal, equally right and wrong, there is nothing to discuss. We cannot weigh up the advantages and disadvantages, because there are none. Moral discussions come to a halt. We cannot even *talk* to the baby-torturer about their ethical choices!

Further, some have cast doubt over whether one is *able* to argue for relativism. Surely within any argument, there is a moral "ought" implied. And that is this; "you ought to believe a logical argument with valid truth claims". This, itself is an objective

ought, as it is imposing a morality, a code of conduct, on others, the supporter assumes it applies to all. So, in trying to convince us of relativism they seem to be forced into implicitly accepting objectivism. In practice, their stance is self-defeating.

On this evidence, it seems relativism is wrong, so it would make sense to accept objective morality as actually being the case.

As our first sentence, “Objective moral values exist” is true, we can move onto the second step in our argument; “objective moral values require a God”. It needs to be said again, this is not the full God of the Christian faith, but simply a personal being, whose very unchangeable essence is “good”.

Now, objective moral values exist, and by their definition are unchangeable. So we know there is a changeless essence out there that is *the* “good”.

But aren't we also obligated to it? We feel guilt when we go against the “good”; if we steal something from a shop, or lie for no good reason. And guilt is only felt when some obligation or duty is broken. So we do, it seems, have a duty to the “good”.

A duty, then, is defined as being held to account for our actions. But surely only a personal being can do that. For instance, I cannot have a duty to, say, a rock, but I can to a human being.

Hence, it would make sense to say that this objective “good” is not only unchangeable, but that he is also personal, because we are obligated to him. This, I believe to be a suitable candidate for the label that is “god”.

In this short article, we have established a choice; on an over-all level morality is either relative or objective. We have to make a decision, but relativism leads to infinite practical problems to the point that it is unworkable. So we chose the view that does appear to work – objectivism.

But we also have a duty to this objective “good”. When we go against it, we feel guilt, which we can only have towards a personal being. So, the “good” is alive, and interactive. We have a personal duty to an objective “good” being, so, it seems that he is deserving of the name “god”

Thus, we can conclude, on the evidence that “a god exists”.

As my atheist friend and I finished off our coffee's I had the answer to her question: Without God, there would be no *good*, no right and wrong. The two are inseparably linked. So, with no God in the picture, what kind of a world would ours be?

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[1] See Peter S. Williams' chapter on the moral argument, in his epic book “The Case for God”, here he uses a very similar syllogism, and explains everything in a very thorough way

[2] For more on why relativism doesn't work, especially in the practical sense, in an easy explanatory format see, *Relativism: Feet firmly planted in mid-air* by Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl.

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