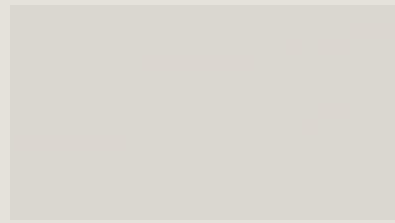




THINK
THEISM

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THEISM**

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Think Theism lectures are supported by Ratio Christi @ Texas A&M, but the opinions represented herein do not necessarily reflect the beliefs or values of Ratio Christi. This content is presented to encourage discussion and critical thought about challenging questions.




RATIO
CHRISTI

The image features a dark, starry background. A large, glowing orange arc, resembling a rising sun or moon, spans across the upper half of the frame. Below the arc, a jagged, purple line-art landscape of mountains and hills stretches across the bottom. The text 'The Moral Argument' is centered in the middle of the image, overlaid on the orange arc.

The Moral Argument

	General Theism	Christian Specific
Positive (i.e. making the case)	Reasons why God exists	Reasons why Christianity is true
Defensive (i.e. responding to objections)	Responses to arguments for atheism	Responses to arguments against Christianity

	General Theism	Christian Specific
Positive (i.e. making the case)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments for God's Existence • Cosmological • Teleological • Moral Argument  • Ontological Argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Testament Textual Transmission • Historical Argument for the Resurrection • Reliability of the Bible • Uniqueness of Jesus • Undesigned Coincidences
Defensive (i.e. responding to objections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem of Evil • Divine Hiddenness • Incoherence of theism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science vs Faith (e.g. Evolution) • Historical Errors in the Bible • Scientific Errors in the Bible • Contradictions in the Bible • Moral Objections to Biblical Stories • Religious Pluralism vs Particularism

The Structure of Classical Apologetics

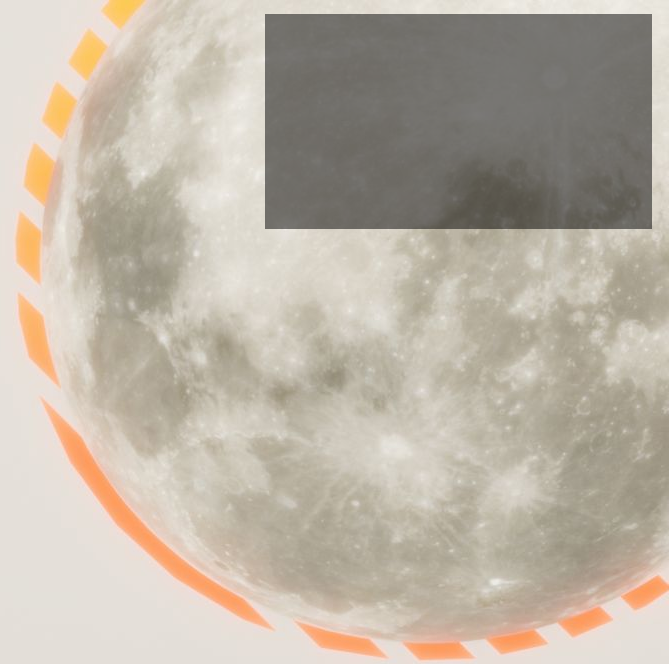


Introduction to our Topic

Natural Theology seeks to provide warrant for belief in God's existence apart from the resources of authoritative, propositional revelation.

Previous two arguments began with core data from the external world that are in need of explanation.

The Moral Argument begins with data from human experience that needs an explanation (e.g., moral knowledge of good/bad, right/wrong, obligations, justice, human worth, and rights).



Moral Argument

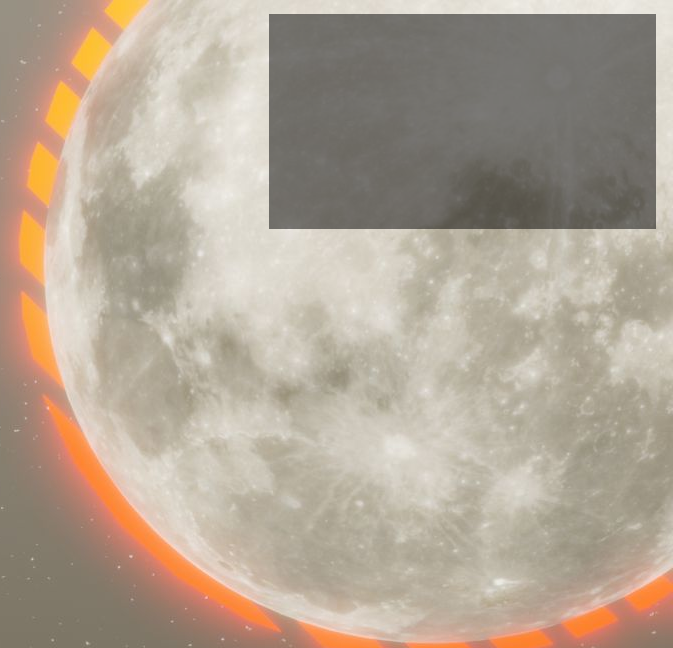
Abductive argument - uses inference to the best explanation, making a probable conclusion that provides reasons for believing God exists.

1. At least some **objective** moral facts exist.
2. The **best explanation** for the existence of objective moral facts is the God of theism.
3. Therefore, (probably) the theistic **God** exists.

NOTE:

Objective - means they are moral and binding independent of human opinion.

Theistic God - is the Ultimate Being who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent; He is the Creator of all things.



Roadmap

1

A Case for Premise #1

Self-evidential nature
Terence Cuneo's argument

2

A Case for Premise #2

Best explanation for human dignity and rights:
Secular Explanations v. Theistic Explanations

3

Conclusion



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Premise #1 At least some objective moral facts exist.

I can be good without God. I don't need God to know what's good or bad or right or wrong. I believe we can have morality without religion or God.

Alvin the Atheist

Actually, I think you're partially correct. You can have substantial moral knowledge without a BELIEF in God. In other words, part of being human is having a moral sense. On that we agree.

Carol the Christian

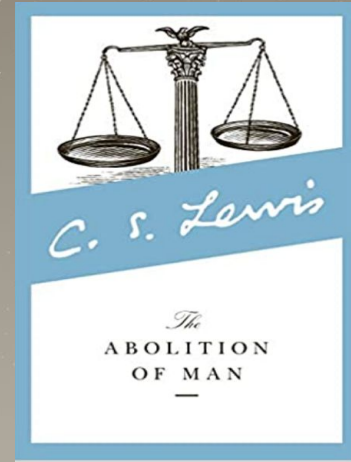
“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...”

Romans 2:14-15

Premise #1 At least some objective moral facts exist.

The first case for premise #1 argues for the self-evidential nature of moral facts that are known by properly functioning humans (sans belief in God):

1. C. S. Lewis' example of *The Tao*
2. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)
3. *The Humanist Manifesto III* (2003)
4. Philosophical Literature (examples of core moral data):
 - i. Torturing and murdering babies for fun is wrong.
 - ii. It is wrong to steal or lie.
 - iii. You ought to keep your promises.
 - iv. Human beings have inherent value and dignity and should be treated justly.



The logo for 'THINK THEISM' is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of a white silhouette of a person sitting at a desk and reading a book, positioned to the left of the words 'THINK THEISM' which are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark, circular background that has a gradient from black to red.

Objections to Objective Morality

- **Ethical Relativism** (cultural) = people ought to act in keeping with their own society's code. Judgments are binding within the culture.
- Critique -
 - Assumption of relativity can be challenged
 - No society can be judged by another - Star Trek examples
 - No moral reformation from within
 - Can't argue that people *ought* to be tolerant
- **Moral nihilism** = objective moral facts do not exist.
 - Expressivism
 - Error Theory - J. L. Mackie



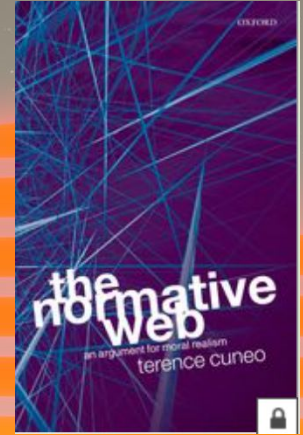
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Premise #1 At least some objective moral facts exist.

The second case for premise #1 is from Terence Cuneo, who argues that moral facts and **epistemic facts** stand or fall together. He targets those who believe epistemic facts exist for ordinary thinking, but deny the existence of moral facts.

- If moral facts do not exist, then epistemic facts do not exist.
- Epistemic facts exist.
- So, moral facts exist.

Epistemic facts Epistemic facts have to do with our belief formation and our evidence, reasons, and justification for knowledge. We follow epistemic norms in theorizing about knowledge and also in everyday evaluations of people's actions and reasoning. In other words, epistemic facts are prescriptive, binding, and intrinsically motivating, much like moral facts. Hence, the normative web.



Examples of Epistemic Norms (rules)

- **General** - It is irrational to make an assertion based on insufficient evidence.
Specific - "I believe in Global Warming because Oprah Winfrey and other celebrities do."
- **General** - It is wrong to ignore evidence because it conflicts with your present belief or theory.
Specific - "I always dismiss the evidence and arguments for the existence of God at RC because I don't want there to be a God."
Specific - "Even if there were compelling evidence that overwhelmingly proved Jesus did not rise from the dead, I would ignore it and still be a Christian."
- **General** - When evaluating the views of others, you should represent/interpret their views fairly.
Specific - "I know that Thomas Nagel is an atheist, so all of his philosophical views are wrong."

NOTE: moral and epistemic norms overlap- ex. fair-mindedness, honesty, humility, conscientiousness, perseverance



Premise #3 Conclusion of Cuneo's Argument

If you deny objective moral facts, you should also deny epistemic facts. But this would be incompatible with being a minimally rational agent and too high a price to pay.

Cuneo's conclusion helps to establish **premise #1**:

- 1. At least some objective moral facts exist.**
- 2. The best explanation for the existence of objective moral facts is God.**
- 3. Therefore, (probably) God exists.**



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Best explanations for Inherent human dignity and rights:
Secular v. Theism

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Euthyphro Objection to Theism



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Premise #2

???

Alvin the Atheist

So, we agree there are at least some objective moral facts. I think now the more interesting question is what best explains the source of objective morality?

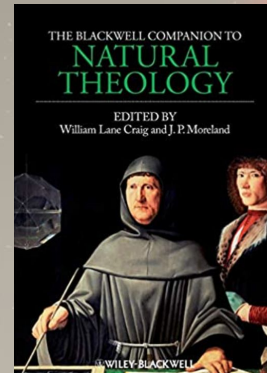
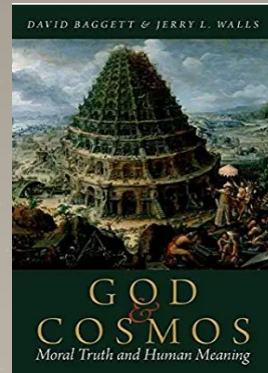
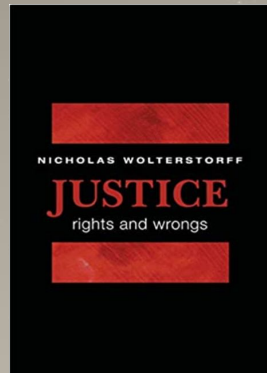
Carol the Christian

Inherent Human Dignity & Natural Rights

Any proposed theory should account for the moral standing of human persons. IOW, it should answer the question: What gives human persons worth, dignity, and rights? What grounds our duty to treat all people justly? Naturalism v. Theism

Naturalism comes in 2 strands:

- Strict Naturalism
- Broad Naturalism

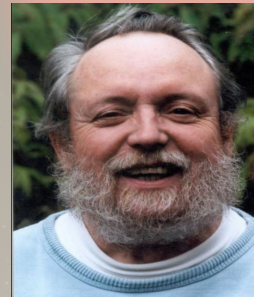
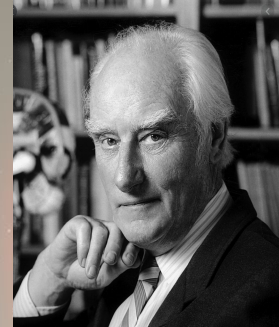


Strict Naturalism

Jerry Fodor, “*Physics fixes all the facts in the world*: physics determines chemistry; chemistry determines biology; biology determines brain science; and brain science determines the mental life.”

Francis Crick, “The Astonishing Hypothesis is that You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and free will, are in fact no more than ***the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules***. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice may have phrased it, “you’re nothing but a pack of neurons.” This hypothesis is so alien to the ideas of most people alive today that it can be truly called astonishing.”

Michael Ruse, “Ethics is an ***illusion*** put in place by natural selection to make us good cooperators.”



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Broad Naturalism - Explanations

- Ethical Egoism
- Virtue Ethics
- Utilitarianism
- Platonism + Evolutionary Ethics
- Kantian Ethics



Inherent Human Dignity & Natural Rights

Theistic Explanation:

1. If the theistic God exists, He has designed human nature for the purpose of discerning moral truth. Therefore, we have reason to believe that the mechanisms responsible for moral judgments are truth-aimed.
2. Judeo-Christian Theistic God - *Imago Dei*
 - a. Image and likeness - capacities
 - b. God's blessing/mandate of dominion of creatures and nature
 - c. Neither is sufficient to include all persons in the circle of dignity.
 - d. Essential aspect, even if not exercised
3. Bestowed Worth Explanation
 - a. If God loves equally and permanently each and every creature who bears the *imago dei*, then the relational property of being loved by God is the source of human dignity and natural rights.



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Theism is the best explanation for human dignity and rights.



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Conclusion - Three Takeaways

1. We began with the core data of our own moral experience. Based on the self-evidential nature of moral norms and their interrelationship with epistemic norms, it is reasonable to conclude that at least some objective moral facts exist.
2. Secular explanations fail to fully explain the core data about the nature and source of objective morality. In particular, the most important value/obligation of human dignity and rights is not accounted for.
3. Theism provides the best explanation for objective morality; in particular, human dignity and rights.



A Parting Thought and Question

- C. S. Lewis said, *“It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power--it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk.”*
- As the theistic grounding for human dignity gradually erodes in a secular society, do you think the idea of natural human rights can continue to stand on its own feet with no foundation? If so, how? If not, why not?

