

# Answering Objections to the Moral Argument for God's Existence

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## The Moral Argument for God's Existence

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

Premise 2. Objective moral values and duties do exist.

Conclusion. Therefore, God exists.

- God—the transcendent moral law-Giver
- Objective—independent of human opinion
- Moral values—moral worth that distinguishes good versus bad (a behavior is bad or good generally—e.g. it is good to help people)
- Moral duties—moral duty that distinguishes right versus wrong (a behavior is obligatory or prohibited—e.g. I ought to help my sister who fell down the stairs)

## Common Objections

1. The argument is not valid (i.e., the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises).

This argument is a valid deductive argument. The conclusion is inescapable if the premises are true.

**Premise 1 is not true. Objective moral values and duties CAN exist WITHOUT God.**

2. Objective morals do exist apart from God due to evolution and social conditioning.

Evolution and social conditioning cannot ground moral values independent of human opinion. Furthermore had evolution been different, perhaps an entirely different set of moral values would have evolved, demonstrating the subjective versus objective nature of morals derived from evolution and social conditioning.

3. Morality is materially and genetically determined.

Materials have no morality. The laws of nature are descriptive whereas moral laws are prescriptive, prescribing shoulds and oughts. Determinism is not compatible with free will, yet free will is necessary for moral obligation. For example, if I am pushed into someone else and had no choice about it, I am not held accountable. If criminals are genetically and chemically determined to commit crimes, they could not be blamed. On materialism, there is no good or evil, only nature doing what nature does.

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4. Atheists can live moral lives. They can know objective moral values and duties.

Knowing and conforming to objective moral values and duties do not require that one *believes* in God, but it does require that God exist. A person can know moral truths without understanding their source or rational grounding. Moral ontology must not be confused with moral epistemology. How we come to know the moral law (epistemology) is different from how these laws exist (ontology).

5. Plato's Euthyphro Dilemma. Either
- something is good because God wills it (and thus moral values are arbitrary; e.g., God could have commanded murder and rape to be good and kindness to be bad, which is unimaginable), or
  - God wills something because it is good (and thus "good" is a standard that is independent of God, that God Himself looks to, so you don't need God to have objective moral values)

This is a false dilemma. There is a third alternative: God wills something because *He* is good. God's commands are an expression of his good nature. God is the source of all goodness and would never command something against his character. Moral goodness therefore is neither arbitrary nor independent of God. There is no "good" apart from God.

**Premise 2 is not true. Objective moral values and duties DO NOT exist.**

6. Moral values are subjective and thus relative for each individual.

If so, no person can ever say the actions of another are wrong. A victim of a car theft would have no grounds to express any moral outrage or appeal for justice. Without objective standards, all behavior is just a matter of opinion. Objective morals are actually undeniable since to deny them, one assumes the moral right to do so.

7. Moral values are subjective and thus relative for each society.

If so, no society could object to any behavior of any other society. If society determines moral values, no reformers who protested against their society's policies were ever morally justified in doing so.

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8. Moral values are subjective and based on a world consensus.

If so, the world consensus values of this century could not condemn the world consensus values of past centuries since they were at that time based on a world consensus. Nor could we today condemn any future action if those actions were to be embraced by a future world consensus.

9. Animals live by instinct and are not morally guilty of anything. To assign a higher moral worth to humans is species-ism (giving undue preference to one's own species).

This observation actually supports premise 1, that without God objective moral values and duties do not exist. Animals are not moral agents. Their instinctive behavior to reproduce and kill for survival is morally neutral. To be consistent, if humans are accidental by-products of natural selection acting on undirected random genetic mutations, then humans are also animals whose behavior is also morally neutral. But if humans are moral agents, then animal behavior is irrelevant to human morality.

10. People's historical and cultural perceptions of morals differ and have differed throughout time (e.g. Hindus believe it is wrong to eat cows; Westerners eat cows).

This objection confuses changing behavior with unchanging duty. The way something *is* does not change the way something *ought to be*. If murder and slavery become rampant in the future, it would not change the moral status of murder and slavery. Differences in perception of a moral law do not undermine the foundational moral principle. Hindus do not eat cows because they perceive that deceased relatives could be in cows. Westerners do not believe deceased relatives are in cows. Both believe it would be wrong to eat deceased relatives. Even if there are disagreements regarding moral principles, it would not follow that objective moral values do not exist. There are many reasons why people resist the law and are blinded to what is right.

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