



God and Morality: Four Views

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Exploring the nature of morality

Where does morality come from? What, if any, is God’s role vis-à-vis morality? Is God necessary for morality? Are morals objective or relative? How do we come to know moral truths?

History has seen a wide variety of responses to these questions. Many have thought the connection between God and morality so strong as to support an argument for God’s existence. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century such moral arguments were standard fare among natural theologians (where natural theology is the project of bolstering the case for theism apart from any special divine revelation). After waning in popularity during the Enlightenment, moral arguments for God’s existence are enjoying renewed interest today. . . .

1. Naturalist Moral Non-realism

Michael Ruse defends the view that morality is, like all the rest of reality, entirely the result of naturalistic evolution. God plays no role in morality because God does not exist. Arguing strenuously that our common perception of morality as objective is illusory, Ruse maintains that our various moral principles exist but only as psychological beliefs useful for our flourishing; morality has no transcendental grounding.

Michael Ruse is the Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University, where he also directs the Program in History and Philosophy of Science. An ardent proponent of Darwinian naturalism, Ruse has published numerous books and articles, including *Taking Darwin Seriously* (Prometheus Books, 1998) and *Biology and the Foundation of Ethics* (coedited with Jane Maienschein, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

2. Naturalist Moral Realism

Though he agrees with Ruse that God plays no role in morality because God does not exist, Evan Fales argues that moral principles are objective in nature. These moral principles, he argues, are grounded in certain facts about human persons that have resulted from purely natural evolutionary processes.

Evan Fales is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Iowa,

BOOK EXCERPT



The Spectrum Multiview Books from IVP Academic offer a range of viewpoints on academic topics about which Christians clearly disagree. In each book, proponents of major positions have an opportunity to make their case, with each of the other contributors offering a brief response. Books in the series range in topic from theology to science, from practical ministry to philosophy.

Recent volumes in the Spectrum series include:

Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views

Justification: Five Views

The Historical Jesus: Five Views

where he has taught for thirty-seven years. Fales's extensive publications in the philosophy of religion, epistemology, and metaphysics include *Causation and Universals* (Routledge, 1990), *A Defense of the Given* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), and *Divine Intervention: Metaphysical and Epistemological Puzzles* (Routledge, 2009).

3. Moral Essentialism

Keith Yandell argues that though God does exist the truth of moral principles does not depend upon him. This is because moral principles, if true, are necessary truths—truths that exist as either abstract objects or the propositional content of divine thoughts. Yandell's position is similar to that of Fales in interesting ways, though Yandell does preserve for God the role of moral exemplar for humans: God may be seen as the model of moral flourishing whom humans strive to resemble.

Keith Yandell is the Julius R. Weinberg Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has written *Hume's "Inexplicable Mystery": His Views on Religion* (Allyn and Bacon, 1971), *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), and *Philosophy of Religion* (Routledge, 1999), as well as numerous papers on God and morality.

4. Moral Particularism

Mark Linville argues that moral principles are objective in nature and ultimately dependent upon God. Distinguishing his view from classical divine command theory, according to which God's commands are constitutive of morality, Linville argues it is God's nature that is the standard for morality. Our moral obligations toward one another, then, arise from our being created in the divine image.

Mark Linville teaches philosophy at Clayton State University. In addition to numerous articles and book chapters, including "The Moral Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Linville is the coeditor (with David Werther) of *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview* (Continuum, 2012) and is the coauthor (with Paul Copan) of *The Moral Argument* (Continuum, forthcoming).

—Adapted from the introduction