

# THE MORAL ARGUMENT

The two previous arguments—the cosmological argument and the design (or teleological) argument—are powerful ways of demonstrating the existence of God. For those who are scientifically minded or for those who demand scientific evidence, they may be quite effective. However, they do require some knowledge of science or, at the very least, the ability to learn scientific concepts. For that reason, these arguments can be difficult to master. A third argument, one that has greater emotional resonance, is the moral argument. The basic argument states that if “objective moral values exist, then God exists; objective moral values do exist; therefore, God exists.”<sup>1</sup>

The experience of moral obligations is universal, because each one of us has a conscience. The fact that we make certain choices but know that we should have made other choices seems to haunt us. We cannot shake this sense of moral duty, even if we try. Not only does this sense of morality haunt us, but it also creates a sense of mystery. What could account for this sense of morality?

Immanuel Kant, the famous German philosopher of the eighteenth century, once claimed, “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Kant compared creation (“the starry heavens above me”) with his conscience (“the moral law within me”). Both point to a Creator and Lawgiver. Everyone has this experience, though many people choose to suppress this knowledge of God (once again, see Rom. 1:18-25). To reawaken this knowledge of God, we must show people that there are moral standards, a moral “law,” and that this law was given to us by God.

A more formal expression of the moral argument can be presented in this way:

1. Every law has a law giver.
2. There is a Moral Law.
3. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.<sup>3</sup>

To which we should add:

4. And that Moral Law Giver is God.

As with the other arguments, we will have to spend much of our time and energy proving the second premise. However, if we are ready and willing, we can awaken within people their

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Copan, “The Moral Argument,” in *Evidence for God* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael R. Licona (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*; quoted in C. Stephen Evans, *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 171.

inherent sense of this moral law. From there, we must show that only God could implant this sense of morality within us.

### **EVERY LAW HAS A LAW GIVER**

This first premise is a tautology, a necessarily true statement. Of course, every law has a law giver. Laws do not exist on their own, as if they were brute facts of nature. If there is such a thing as a law, it must come from somewhere. It must have an intelligent origin. Because the moral law is immaterial (there is no gene for morality, despite what evolutionary psychologists wish to believe), it must have an intelligent and immaterial origin. We will come back to this idea later.

### **THERE IS A MORAL LAW**

This second premise seems obvious to most people, or so it would seem. According to John Frame, “Moral values, after all, are rather strange. We cannot see them, hear them, or feel them, but we cannot doubt that they exist.”<sup>4</sup> Yet many people in our society would ascribe the existence of moral values not to God, but to our culture. They believe moral values are manmade. Therefore, they do not accept the idea of an objective moral standard. People who hold such beliefs are called moral relativists.

Though moral relativism is prominent among younger generations, I doubt that many people who hold this view have thought about the implications of such a moral philosophy. They simply accept the idea without challenging it. Our job is to get people to think about morality, to awaken the conscience that God gave them.

Before we think of ways of awakening the moral conscience, it would benefit us to think about different moral philosophies.

### **Christian morality**

This moral philosophy should be very familiar to us. It is derived from the Christian worldview, which holds that God is the prime reality and that an absolute, objective moral standard comes from God. You may recall from our discussion of worldviews that this objective moral standard is based on the character of God.<sup>5</sup>

Plato, in his dialogue called *Euthyphro*, raised a supposed dilemma. This dilemma held that either something is good because God (or the gods, as he would have it) wills it, or God wills something because it is good. William Lane Craig explains:

If it is good just because God wills it, then what is good becomes arbitrary. God could have willed that hatred and jealousy be good, and then we should have been obligated to hate and envy one another. But that seems implausible; at least some moral goods seem to be necessary. But if we say instead that God wills

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<sup>4</sup> John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 93.

<sup>5</sup> See page 158 above.

something because it is good, then whether something is good or bad is independent of God. In that case, it seems that moral value exists independently of God.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, if moral values existed independently of God, that would undermine our argument. However, Plato failed to recognize the possibility that God wills a command because it is a reflection of his character. We must remember that God says, “Be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16).

### **Humanistic morality**

This type of morality is the kind that deists possess. They believe that we can determine right and wrong through reason and intuition. However, what is our basis for morality when we reason? In other words, how do we reason our way to an objective moral standard? This task is impossible if there is not an actual objective moral standard. And if an actual objective moral standard, a moral law, exists, then we must ask what the source of this standard is. Alternatively, if we rely on intuition to determine what is right and wrong, we must ask how we can sense morality. An intuitive sense of morality would require an actual moral standard. God is the one who gives this moral standard, and he is the one who put a moral conscience within us (Rom. 2:14-16).

### **“Might makes right”**

If we abandon any sense of a divinely given, objective moral standard, then we would be left with some rather unattractive alternatives. The morality of power, or “might makes right,” is something quite scary. Some philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes and Friedrich Nietzsche, realized that if God does not exist, then the powerful decide what is “right.” (As previously mentioned, Dostoyevsky suggested that if there is no God, all things are possible.)

Of course, we have seen this played out in world history, particularly in Nazi Germany. The Nazis came to power and decided that it was “right” to kill Jews and others. No sane person finds such “morality” acceptable. Just because certain people (governing authorities, the rich, media moguls) are in power does not give them the right to decide what is right and what is wrong.

### **Ethics of the polls**

This moral philosophy is closely related to the previous one. It says that the majority determines what is right. But who would approve of the majority oppressing the minority? If that were right, we would believe that genocide or the violation of human rights is morally acceptable.

The Christian worldview holds that all human beings have value, because they are made in the image of God. Therefore, all people, whether they belong to the majority or the minority, should be treated with respect. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote, “A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of

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<sup>6</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 181.

harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.”<sup>7</sup> If the laws of the land do not square with the law of God, they are unjust. King knew that racist laws created by the white majority were unjust, and he fought against them by appealing to the moral law of God.

### **“Whatever feels right”**

The ethics of pleasure says, “If it feels good, do it!” This is otherwise known as Epicureanism (named after Epicurus, the Greek philosopher who lived 341-270 BC), hedonistic ethics, or the ethics of pleasure. The original form of this moral philosophy was not hedonism in the sense that we might think of it (pursuing greater and greater amounts of pleasure at all costs), but rather it sought an absence of pain. However, when pleasure (or the avoidance of pain) is the ultimate good, there can be problems. What if what is right is painful? What happens when someone else’s pleasure gets in the way of your pleasure? We cannot simply both be right. This moral philosophy is built on the shifting sands of our feelings, is therefore not reliable, and cannot be used to judge or to mediate disputes.

### **Utilitarianism or pragmatism**

This moral philosophy maintains that what is right is what benefits the most people. In other words, whatever produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people is right. But this, like the ethics of the polls, has the potential to oppress the minority. It is also contingent upon the definition of happiness. What is happiness? And should happiness be the ultimate good and the ultimate goal?

### **Moral relativism**

According to this philosophy, all morals are relative. Generally, it states that all moral standards are manmade, the products of societies and cultures. The relativist’s argument is that people disagree on morality, evidenced by the fact that different cultures have had different morals. We can look at, for instance, the morals of today’s Western culture and compare them with the Western culture of two or three hundred years ago, or compare them with ancient societies or third-world countries. Surely, we will see different moral standards. Therefore, morality is relative to each culture.

If you recall our study of worldviews, you will notice that this type of morality is typical of the postmodern worldview. Postmodernism rejects absolute truth and absolute morality. Instead, postmodernists believe that truth and morality are the products of stories or language, which themselves are the product of cultures. The same critiques of postmodernism mentioned previously hold true here.

While it is true that different societies have disagreed about morality, it does not mean that there is no absolute and objective moral standard. Imagine a remote tribe in which the culture indeed creates a morality, one that is offensive to us. Perhaps this tribe practices human

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in *The Book of Virtues*, ed. William Bennett (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 260; quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 337.

sacrifice. If morality is simply relative, we should have no problem with their behavior. After all, they live in a society where that is simply the norm. If you say there is no absolute and objective moral law, then what this tribe does is simply what they do. It is neither moral nor immoral. Of course, we know better than this. We recognize that their practices are immoral. The fact that we recognize this as immoral, and not just part of their culture, shows us that an objective moral standard exists. People may disagree about the solution to a math problem, but that doesn't mean there are several right answers.

Similarly, it would be unthinkable for people to say that genocide in a foreign country is simply the morality of another culture. If a person were presented with news that such a genocide took place and said, "Well, that's morally acceptable in their culture," he or she would be considered crazy.

Talk about vastly different moral standards in different cultures has been exaggerated. This is what Dinesh D'Souza writes:

Over the last several decades anthropologists have been comparing the norms and practices of the various cultures of the world. Two of their findings are relevant for our purpose. First, morality is universal. Scholars know of no culture, past or present, that does not have a system of morality. Even though moral standards may vary from one culture to another, or even within a particular culture, every culture distinguishes "what is" from "what ought to be." It is impossible for a culture either to rise above morality or to get out from under it.

Second, the moral diversity we have all heard so much about is in fact vastly exaggerated. In particular, the major religions of the world, which represent the vast majority of humans on the planet, disagree quite a bit about God but agree quite a bit about morality. All the major religions have some form of the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.<sup>8</sup>

Cultures often agree on more than the Golden Rule. C. S. Lewis famously compiled a list of ethical commands from various religions and compared them in the appendix to his book, *The Abolition of Man*. Usually, cultures that do go astray from the moral law are ones that are actively rebelling against God, or ones where Christianity is simply not influential.

No one is truly a moral relativist. When we react to true evil—Hitler and the holocaust or 9/11—it shows that we know a true moral law has been violated. This reaction has been called the "argument from damnation," because people say of villains such as Hitler, "Damn them!" But if there is no absolute and objective morality—no God, no heaven, and no hell—then such a sentiment is meaningless. Perhaps that is why one writer, reacting to the evil of 9/11, said, "This destruction seems to cry out for a transcendent ethical perspective."<sup>9</sup>

We all go around saying, "He should do this," or, "She shouldn't do that." Every time a *should*, *ought*, or *must* (or their negations, such as *should not*) is uttered, the moral law is proved.

<sup>8</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great About Christianity?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 234.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Rothstein, "Attacks on U.S. Challenge Postmodern True Believers," *New York Times*, September 22, 2001.

The fact that no one is truly a moral relativist will be seen clearly should you ever transgress another person's sense of what is right and wrong. D'Souza offers some advice for revealing the moral law to relativists:

If you are confronted by a relativist who insists that all morality is relative, go ahead and punch him in the face. If he does not respond, punch him again. At some point he will protest, "That's not right. You shouldn't have done that." Then you can explain to him that your actions were purely educational. You were simply demonstrating to him that even he does not believe his relativist doctrine. His objection was not "I don't like being punched" but rather "you should not have done it." He was appealing to an unwavering standard, which he expected you to share, that what you did was wrong.<sup>10</sup>

I'm quite sure that he doesn't actually that course of action, but it's funny to imagine. He offers another way to reach a relativist. "So the way to call their bluff and expose their relativism as purely tactical is to insult the moral values they cherish. For example, you could say, 'I don't know why we have laws outlawing racial discrimination and gay-bashing. How can people presume to legislate morality?'"<sup>11</sup> Of course, he doesn't mean that Christians believe it is morally acceptable to be racist or to hate gay people or to punch others in the face. He is proving a point: everyone has moral standards and everyone assumes, even if they don't realize it, that these standards should not be violated. The only reason they shouldn't be violated is because they are absolute and objective, not relative.

Moral relativism is an impossible philosophy to maintain with any integrity. It is like the postmodern view of truth: it destroys itself. Whenever a relativist makes any absolute comment on morality—"No one should impose their religious morals on me"—they are assuming that it would be immoral to do so. This double standard reveals that everyone has a sense of morality.

We could not escape this sense of moral obligation or duty even if we tried. God made us to know that certain things are right and other things are wrong. Regardless of what we believe, our conscience will not go away. Tim Keller observes this fact. "Why is it impossible (in practice) for anyone to be a consistent moral relativist even when they claim that they are? The answer is that we all have a pervasive, powerful, and unavoidable belief not only in moral values but also in moral *obligation*."<sup>12</sup> He then defines moral obligation. "Moral obligation is a belief that some things ought not to be done regardless of how a person feels about them within herself, regardless of what the rest of her community and culture says, and regardless of whether it is in her self-interest or not."<sup>13</sup> Everyone, with the possible exception of the insane, knows there are *oughts* and *shoulds* and *should nots*.

Not only can we not escape an absolute and objective morality, but if we looked at the issue more carefully, we would soon realize that we would not want to escape such a thing.

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<sup>10</sup> D'Souza, *What's So Great About Christianity?*, 235.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 151.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

### **Without the moral law, there can be no moral progress or reform**

One of the great problems of moral relativism—or the lack of an absolute and objective morality—is that it makes the idea of moral progress impossible. Think about it: if there is no objective measure of moral goodness or wickedness, then everything is morally equal. If we accept that moral relativity is true, then right and wrong are nothing but cultural constructs, things that people decide for a time and a place. If a society decides that slavery or racism is moral, then it is. Douglas Groothuis writes, “According to cultural relativism, [Martin Luther] King and all other laudatory moral reformers should be condemned as cultural and moral *deviants* who must be deemed immoral when judged by the extant standards of their societies.”<sup>14</sup> The idea of moral progress implies an objective moral standard. If a society is progressing morally, it is approaching that moral standard. But without an objective moral standard, a moral yardstick, so to speak, then there is nothing by which to measure “reform.” It is simply change.

### **Without the moral law, there would be no human rights**

People of varying convictions often appeal to the idea of human rights. The appeal to human rights has brought us real moral progress. It helped end slavery and racist laws. People often appeal to human rights to advocate immorality, such as the current gay rights movement. When people demand certain liberties or privileges because of human rights, we should ask, “*Why* do we have human rights?” This question may get people to think about the ultimate standard of morality.

When people appeal to human rights, they are essentially claiming that it is morally right to treat each individual human being with respect and dignity. Furthermore, it is morally right to grant each person certain liberties. This is a moral philosophy, not one derived from science. Therefore, it does not belong to naturalism, but to the Christian worldview. The Founding Fathers claimed that human rights were self-evident, but they also acknowledged a Creator who endowed people with certain rights. Apart from an objective moral standard that says it is immoral to deny human rights—and, ultimately, apart from the existence of God—there is no reason to have human rights.

### **Without the moral law, it is impossible to have ultimate justice**

If all morals are relative, there is no real sense of justice. Any justice we would have is the punishment of someone who transgressed manmade ethical norms. However, we all know that there are people who do evil things and seem to “escape” without facing justice. One example is Hitler, who did great evil things. But if you are a moral relativist, you cannot claim that Hitler was terribly evil. He just did what was permissible in his society. And when he committed suicide, there was no judgment awaiting him. Not only is such a thought foreign to the Christian worldview, but is unsatisfying, because we know that justice should be done.

### **Without the moral law, we cannot judge between conflicting moralities**

The only way moral relativism could ever work is if countries or cultures with different moral rules never encountered each other. In this age of global travel and communications,

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<sup>14</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 337.

however, we no longer have isolated societies. In fact, we could argue that we have never had completely isolated societies. Wars have been waged from the beginning of humanity.

When two countries are at war, it is because of some moral issue. If all morals are manmade and relative, there is no way of determining which country is right and which one is wrong. They are both right, in a sense, because they are both acting according to their own morals.

Similarly, if all morals are manmade and relative, who are we to declare another government's actions immoral? Who are we to say a society halfway across the world is wicked? We could not say such things. To declare one society or government morally inferior (or superior), we would have to appeal to some objective standard.

### **Conclusion**

It seems that moral relativism is impossible. Furthermore, it is undesirable. There must be an objective moral standard. The second premise of our argument, there is a moral law, must be true.

### **THERE IS A MORAL LAW GIVER**

The first two premises would seem to be true. However, some people acknowledge an objective moral standard but still reject a giver of that law. Two things challenge the idea of a moral law giver: atheistic moral realism and evolution.

#### **Atheistic moral realism**

This moral philosophy maintains that there is no God, yet there are objective moral facts that exist necessarily. The idea is parallel to the atheist's view of the laws of nature: they simply exist, there is no law giver. There are morally despicable actions like rape or child abuse, and there are morally admirable things like love, yet there is no accounting for these things are so.

There are many problems with this theory. One problem is that moral facts are immaterial. They cannot be reduced to part of the material world. Morals cannot be measured, in the way that the force of gravity can. So, moral facts (objective morals, or the moral law) are immaterial. They must exist as propositions, true statements. A proposition requires one who proposes; a statement requires one who speaks. A stated moral fact requires an intelligent agent who can speak it into existence.

The truth is that you cannot have both an objective moral standard and no God. Yet people try. They want to have human rights and the freedom to live as if there is no God.

Arthur Allen Leff wrote an interesting article in the *Duke Law Journal* over three decades ago.<sup>15</sup> He begins the article with the following paragraph:

I want to believe—and so do you—in a complete, transcendent, and immanent set of propositions about right and wrong, *findable* rules that authoritatively and unambiguously direct us how to live righteously. I also want

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur Allen Leff, "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law," *Duke Law Journal* 1979, no. 6 (1979):1229-1249. This article was brought to my attention by Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 350-56.

to believe—and so do you—in no such thing, but rather that we are wholly free, not only to choose for ourselves what we ought to do, but to decide for ourselves, individually and as a species what we ought to be. What we want, Heaven help us, is simultaneously to be perfectly ruled and perfectly free, that is, at the same time to discover the right and the good and to create it.<sup>16</sup>

Notice what he is saying: we all want transcendent and authoritative rules, yet we want to be free to choose how we ought to live. This is quite a conundrum. We want there to be a God and we also want to be free to live as if he didn't exist.

Leff acknowledges that if God establishes those authoritative moral propositions, then they cannot be challenged, because there is no one greater than God. “Either God exists or He does not, but if He does not, nothing and no one else can take His place.”<sup>17</sup> However if God exists, we cannot have the individual freedom that we desire. We cannot choose our own moral standard, and so be free to do whatever we want. Yet, if God does not exist, we have problems:

We are never going to get anywhere (assuming for the moment that there is somewhere to get) in ethical or legal theory unless we finally face the fact that, in the Psalmist's words, there is no one like unto the Lord. If He does not exist, there is no metaphoric equivalent. No person, no combination of people, no document however hallowed by time, no process, no premise, nothing is equivalent to an actual God in this central function as the unexaminable examiner of good and evil. The so-called death of God turns out not to have been just *His* funeral; it also seems to have effected the total elimination of any coherent, or even more-than-momentarily convincing, ethical or legal system dependent upon finally authoritative extrasystemic premises.<sup>18</sup>

If God doesn't exist, there is no coherent and authoritative ethical or legal system. Such a system may be proposed, but if God is not behind this system, we can always ask, “Says who?” (Or, as Leff writes, “Sez who?”) For instance, we may be told that something is ethically wrong. We can then respond with the question, “Says who?” If there is a God, we can say, “God,” and there is no more debate, because there is no greater authority. But if there isn't a God, then we can always challenge any moral claim.

Leff explores this idea for about twenty pages. Obviously, he does not believe in God, yet he realizes this creates great problems. He ends the article with these words:

All I can say is this: it looks as if we are all we have. Given what we know about ourselves and each other, this is an extraordinarily unappetizing prospect; looking around the world, it appears that if all men are brothers, the ruling model is Cain and Abel. Neither reason, nor love, nor even terror, seems to have worked to make us “good,” and worse than that, there is no reason why

<sup>16</sup> Leff, “Unspeakable Ethics,” 1229.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1231.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1232.

anything should. Only if ethics were something unspeakable by us, could law be unnatural, and therefore unchallengeable. As things now stand, everything is up for grabs.

Nevertheless:

Napalming babies is bad.

Starving the poor is wicked.

Buying and selling each other is depraved.

Those who stood up to and died resisting Hitler, Stalin, Amin, and Pol Pot—and General Custer too—have earned salvation.

Those who acquiesced deserve to be damned.

There is in the world such a thing as evil.

[All together now:] Sez who?

God help us.<sup>19</sup>

If there is no God, everything is up for grabs. Yet we know things aren't up for grabs. There are moral evils (such as napalming babies) and certain people deserve damnation. Sez who? God.

### **Evolutionary Theories**

Evolutionists believe that we can ascribe morality to the genetic desire to survive. In other words, our sense of morality is not real, aligning with a transcendent objective moral standard. Rather, our sense of morality helps us to survive. Darwinists (or, perhaps to be more precise, neo-Darwinists) believe in kin selection, the idea that we desire to have our descendents survive and would therefore act in altruistic, noble, self-sacrificing ways in order for our genes to be passed on. Accordingly, if you saw your children in a burning building, you would rush in to save them, even though it could possibly spell your doom. Putting oneself into a dangerous situation would seem to be contrary to the survival of the fittest, but the desire to have your genes survive another generation would override your desire for safety.

It is an interesting idea, though I doubt that this could ever be proven scientifically. For this to be true, one's DNA would have to possess intelligence. One's DNA would have to know that it is desirable for one's descendants to survive, and would have to know that one's descendants were imperiled. That is a lot to ask of our DNA. Of course, the Darwinist could claim that having one's children survive helps a parent survive because children bring a sense of emotional welfare that affects our physical welfare.

However, altruistic behavior is not limited towards one's family. Why do people risk their lives to help strangers? Darwinists explain such sacrifice by talking about reciprocal altruism, the idea that we do good things for strangers because we expect them to act that way toward us. Again, there is no evidence for such a theory, and it seems far-fetched to think that our genes act in such a manner.

In fact, some scientists are willing to admit that there is no evidence for this concept. Ernst Mayr, an evolutionary biologist, admits that "altruism toward strangers is a behavior not

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1249.

supported by natural selection.”<sup>20</sup> Of course, this doesn’t prevent scientists from claiming that there is such a thing as an altruism gene.

However, let’s think about that for a moment. If altruism, the unselfish concern for the welfare of others, is simply the result of having an altruism gene, then why do we praise altruistic behavior? You don’t necessarily praise someone who is tall (or has blue eyes) and condemn someone who is short (or has brown eyes). Those traits are the products of our genes. But moral behavior is a choice, not something that that is predetermined by our DNA.

Darwinists confuse what is with what ought to be. According to evolutionary theory, everything is the result of natural selection. We simply are the way we are, according to Darwin and his disciples, because of time, chance, and natural selection. Morality, however, is not simply the way things are. It concerns the way things should be.

Perhaps no one wrote more powerfully in favor of the moral argument than C. S. Lewis. He realized that the moral law is different from the natural law. “Each man is at every moment subjected to several different sets of law but there is only one of these which he is free to disobey.”<sup>21</sup> We are not free to disobey the law of gravity, but we are free to disobey the moral law. He realized that morality cannot be explained by evolution. This passage shows why:

Supposing you hear a cry for help from a man in danger. You will probably feel two desires—one a desire to give help (due to your herd instinct), the other a desire to keep out of danger (due to the instinct for self-preservation). But you will find inside you, in addition to these two impulses, a third thing which tells you that you ought to follow the impulse to help, and suppress the impulse to run away. Now this thing that judges between two instincts, that decides which should be encouraged, cannot itself be either of them. You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, is itself one of the notes on the keyboard. The Moral Law tells us the tune we have to play: our instincts are merely the keys.<sup>22</sup>

Each of us have two instincts (which could be possibly be explained by evolution): the desire to help the group and the desire to save ourselves. Those instincts are like two different keys on the piano—we could play either of them. But there is something else, a third thing, which tells us what we ought to do. It tells us which key we should play. This *ought*, something immaterial, which cannot be reduced to brain chemistry or DNA, must come from somewhere. Actually, it must come from Someone who gave us a conscience, a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

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<sup>20</sup> Ernst Mayr, *What Evolution Is* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 259; quoted in D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity?*, 239.

<sup>21</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. (1952; repr. New York: Touchstone, 1996), 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

## THE MORAL LAW GIVER IS GOD

The moral law is immaterial, like the physical laws that govern our universe and the laws of logic that govern reason. Immaterial laws must be the product of an intelligent mind. They do not come from the physical universe itself. In the cosmological argument, we showed that the universe must have been created by God, for he alone exists outside of space and time.

Moral absolutes also imply that they are created by a person. All our moral obligations are interpersonal. For example, I know that it is wrong to hit someone else in the face because it hurts another person. I know it is wrong not to pay someone for services that I have contracted, because it hurts that other person. Yet there are immoral things that we do (such as lustful, greedy, or angry thoughts) that seem to harm no other person. Yet they do harm a person. They harm God. (Once again, we must clarify that God is a person, or, actually, three persons and one God. The word “person” does not mean human being.)

If we have a sense of moral obligation that we cannot shake (as Keller says), then that sense of moral obligation must come from a person. And if there is an absolute moral obligation, there must be an absolute person behind it. According to John Frame, “If obligations arise from personal relationships, then absolute obligations must arise from our relationship with an absolute person.”<sup>23</sup>

Before we conclude this section, one final point must be made. People do not have to believe in God to be moral. That is not the argument we are making. Many agnostics and atheists are very moral people, sometimes more moral than those who claim to be Christians. You don’t have to be aware of absolute morality, much less the God who created that absolute morality, to be moral. After all, you don’t have to be aware of a Creator to be part of the creation, and you don’t have to be aware of a Designer to have incredible design in your body. Christianity is not a tool to become a moral person. (I’m amazed by how often people argue that they don’t need religion to be moral, as if that were the point of Christianity.)

No, the point is not that you need to be a Christian to be moral. The point is that without God, there is no objective morality. Without God, there would be no universe, no design or goal to life, and no standard of morality to judge what is good and what is evil.

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<sup>23</sup> Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 99.