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A Reformulation of the Moral Argument for God's Existence

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Introduction

In 2019, Netflix released a documentary that portrayed the life, deeds, and death of Ted Bundy, who was one of the most famous sociopaths and serial killers in the United States of America during the 70s. The documentary contains some very realistic dramatizations along with the actual tapes of the confessions of many of Bundy's terrible murders and horrific rapes. After having committed all these acts, he was condemned to capital punishment. His own description of the way he would attack, murder, and rape his female victims is strong enough to negatively stir the emotions of anyone listening, and nauseate even the most stoical spectator. This leaves one wondering whether he knew that his behavior was *morally evil* and highly condemnable. Now, even though it is generally agreed that both sociopaths and psychopaths lack certain emotional baggage that non-psychopathic people do not (i.e., empathy, guilt, etc.), cognitive research has been lately suggesting that it is not so much a matter of sociopaths and psychopaths not *knowing* what is right and wrong; rather, it is matter of their not *caring* about their actions morally. As Cima, Tonnaer, and Hauser have suggested, "Psychopaths know what is right or wrong, but simply don't care."[1] This certainly could, in principle, apply to cases like those of dictators and political leaders such as Hitler, Mao, Stalin, Pol Pot, and others as well. Yet, while this sort of information might have important legal consequences[2], it also raises several relevant, philosophical questions regarding the nature of human motivation and of morality in general.

Sociopaths and psychopaths are not the only people who behave in morally inappropriate ways despite the knowledge that they have (though hopefully not as evil as Bundy). It only takes a simple introspective and retrospective analysis to realize that one can act—indeed, does act—against a moral law evident to one's consciousness. Even though it might be true that normal people do not act "as bad" as psychopaths and sociopaths, it is patently true that the way in which human beings act *de facto* does not amount to the way in which human beings *ought to* act. Now, given this peculiar behavior in human beings, the question natural and ineluctably arises as to what the ultimate foundation for acting morally is; the question becomes whether there is an ultimate, *ontological* foundation for acting morally; moreover, if there is no ultimate ontological

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[1] Cf. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2010, Pages 59–67, https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsp051

[2] Apart from the legal implications, this could even constitute important defeaters and implications for non-cognitivist systems of normative ethics like emotivism, given that these systems depend on the causal relationship between emotion and actions to some extent.

foundation, do human beings still have warrant or justification for acting morally at all or is it nothing more than social conventions? It is undeniable that human beings have the natural dispositions to look after certain goods, at least in terms of prudential goods. Nevertheless, this tendency could be explained as its being *nothing more* than the goal-directed, adaptive behavior that human beings have naturally acquired and developed throughout the process of evolutionary history in order to secure survival[3]. As philosopher of science Michael Ruse emphatically states:

> The position of the modern evolutionist, therefore, is that humans have an awareness of morality...because such an awareness is of biological worth. Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth...Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says "Love thy neighbor as thyself," they think they are referring above and beyond themselves...Nevertheless...such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction...and any deeper meaning is illusory.[4]

Another way of rephrasing the problem would be by asking whether the paradigm of philosophical naturalism is true or not, and what implications the answer to that question would have to the one's view on axiology in general.[5] However, if philosophical naturalism fails to give a proper account of the nature of the moral phenomena that human beings experience, then it will undoubtedly be extremely important to postulate an alternative framework from which to work in order to make sense out of that experience, *viz.*, classical theism.

It is interesting to note that, historically, the most important ethical systems have always had God as some sort of anchor for their perspectives, at least as the systems were originally conceived. As Professor John Hare wittingly states, after having compared virtue ethics, deontic ethics, and consequentialist ethics:

> In all three pictures of morality I have tried to point to two features that theism contributed to the original versions, one feature being, in a broad sense, metaphysical and one being

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[3] Notice that this problem has nothing to do evolutionary theory *per se*. The real issue at stake here is whether human behavior can be accounted for *merely* in terms of biology, physics and chemistry or if there is something *more* than that reductionist explanation.

[4] Ruse, M., "Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics," in *The Darwinian Paradigm*, London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 268-69.

[5] It is important to make a necessary distinction between philosophical naturalism (i.e., the worldview that denies supernatural entities, like God, souls, and other metaphysical realities) and methodological naturalism (which implies that one should limit oneself to using the *method* of the natural science in order to argue for any given point of view). In this sense, while probably all (or most) philosophical naturalists are methodological naturalists, not all methodological naturalists are philosophical naturalists. Although I disagree with both views (understood in a certain sense), I do not intend to argue against methodological naturalism in this work. It is only my intent to argue against philosophical naturalism.

internal to ethical motivation. The two features are different in each of the three cases, because the pictures are different. But theism in each case ties the ethical and the metaphysical together. In each case, the way we ought to live harmonizes in some way (different in the different theories) with the way the universe is, beyond ourselves and our choices. Perhaps this is one function of most religion, sufficiently vaguely formulated so as to cover the varieties in metaphysical and ethical positions within the world's various faiths. At least that is a hypothesis worth checking. Whether there are versions of the three pictures of morality I have described that can survive the deletion of the original theological premises can only be settled by looking at proposed candidates, one by one. [I have] shown, in the first half, that one traditional kind of morality involves commitments that require theological premises in their defense, if they are to be rationally stable. In the second half I have tried to show the place that theological premises held in the original versions of the main types of ethical theory we are familiar with. This has the potential advantage of showing where nontheist versions of these theories will have to find substitutes for God's work if they want to delete these premises. [6]

While some nontheists and atheists are optimistic, not all of them have been so optimistic in the history of philosophy. Friedrich Nietzsche is one example of this kind of a not-so-optimistic atheist. He poignantly tells his readers about the madman and the nihilistic implications of the "death of God" for the human race. Therefore, it is worth quoting at length:

> Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? - Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; I'll tell you! We have killed him - you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sidewards, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit

[6] Hare, J., "Is Moral Goodness without Belief in God Rationally Stable?" in Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009, pp. 95-96.

in the morning? Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? - Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed - and whoever is horn after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!' Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; they too were silent and looked at him disconcertedly. Finally he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early', he then said; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars - and yet they have done it themselves!' It is still recounted how on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there started singing his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but, 'What then are these churches now if not the tombs and sepulchres of God?'[7]

Thus, for Friedrich Nietzsche, without God, there is not "an up and a down" left. It seems that, for him, there is no ultimate purpose, meaning or morality; absolute nihilism follows logically from this position. If one attempted to put it in terms of a *modus ponens* sort of argument, at least on one interpretation of the German philosopher, it would probably look something like this: if God is dead (does not exist), then ultimate purpose, meaning, and morality are illusory. God does not exist. Therefore, there is no ultimate purpose, meaning, and morality.[8] While some nontheists might argue against the soundness of this argument, affirming plausible explanations of morality from the naturalist perspective, it is definitely worth wondering why Nietzsche thought that these were some of the practical implications of God's non-existence. Does God's existence or non-existence make any practical[9] difference whatsoever?

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[7] Nietzsche, F., *The Gay Science*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 119-120.

[8] Regardless of the sociological interpretation or the cultural criticism that withdraws from this passage, the fact remains: the conclusion from this reasoning, understood *prima facie*, sound at the very least plausible.

[9] The word "practical" is evidently understood here in terms of the classical distinction between *praxis* (related to ethical wisdom) and *poiesis* (technical, or artistic practice). The word "practical" will, unless otherwise indicated, always refer to the former rather than the latter throughout this work.

In reality, some have argued throughout the history of the philosophy of religion that whether God exists or not does have very substantial and relevant consequences from the viewpoint of the ontological foundations of morality. Furthermore, some have proposed what has been called a "moral argument for the existence of God." As Dr. Norman Geisler says, "Another basic approach to the existence of God is the moral one. At first it was not used as a rational argument but as a practical postulate. Later forms of this approach, however, have been presented as *bona fide* attempts to establish God's existence by rational argumentation."[10] Indeed, Geisler suggests that the moral argument as it is contemporarily presented has its roots in Immanuel Kant. He says, "Most arguments for the existence of God, such as the cosmological argument and teleological argument, are from the ancient world. The ontological argument comes from medieval times. But the moral argument has modem ancestry, emanating from the works of Immanuel Kant."[11] In this sense, even though some could claim to see some sort similar argument in thinkers such as Saint Augustine and others, the most explicit argumentations intended to prove God's existence in this manner come from the modern world from thinkers such as Kant, Rashdall, Sorley, Trueblood, (C.S.) Lewis, Craig, Baggett, and Walls.[12]

In recent years, the moral argument has gained prominence among Christian apologists, particularly through the popular-level works of C.S. Lewis and the academic work of people like Robert Adams and William Lane Craig. The persuasive power of this family of arguments seems to lie in the fact that "ordinary people" tend to view religion and ethics as intricately related. While this is an interesting sociological feature in and of itself, what is more interesting is that some professional philosophers have in recent years studied the moral arguments more closely, and more sophisticated versions of such arguments have come out, precisely because the moral realm seems to shout out for an explanation that a naturalistic and atheistic worldview does not seem to provide. Indeed, on the one hand, naturalistic[13] explanations of morality have been proposed. For this reason, Stephen Evans has characterized the family of moral arguments in the following way:

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[10] Geisler Norman L. and Corduan, W., *Philosophy of Religion*, California: Baker Book House, 1988, part II.
[11] Geisler, N. L., "Moral Argument for God", in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999, p. 112.
[12] Cf. *Ibid.*
[13] While the term naturalism will be explained more fully below, it is important to point out that, in this context, naturalism will be intricately related to atheism insofar as atheism seems to be strongly correlated with ontological naturalism.

> Moral arguments for God's existence form a diverse family of arguments that reason from some feature of morality or the moral life to the existence of God, usually understood as a morally good creator of the universe. Moral arguments are both important and interesting. They are interesting because evaluating their soundness requires attention to practically every important philosophical issue dealt with in metaethics. They are important because of their prominence in popular apologetic arguments for religious belief. Evidence for this can be found in the amazing popularity of C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* (1952), which is almost certainly the best-selling book of apologetics in the twentieth century, and which begins with a moral argument for God's existence. Many ordinary people regard religion as in some way providing a basis or foundation for morality. This fact might seem to favor religious arguments for morality rather than moral arguments for religious belief, but if someone believes that morality is in some way "objective" or "real," and that this moral reality requires explanation, moral arguments for God's reality naturally suggest themselves. The apparent connection between morality and religion appears to many people to support the claim that moral truths require a religious foundation, or can best be explained by God's existence, or some qualities or actions of God.[14]

Given the contextual analysis stated above, it will be the aim of this work to accomplish two main goals: 1) to attempt to show that ontological naturalism fails to properly account for both the metaphysical foundation of the moral phenomena that human beings experience and even some epistemological aspects of it, and 2) to suggest that classical theism—mainly understood in terms of the Judeo-Christian tradition and its conception of the human person—has a very substantial competitive advantage compared to ontological naturalism.[15] If both goals were successfully achieved, this would give strong reasons to suggest that a moral argument (or an axiological argument) for God's existence of some sort is highly plausible.

In order to achieve goal 1), a threefold pathway will be followed. First, it will be argued that ontological naturalism can ultimately only end in some form of moral nihilism, in virtue of its overall atheistic view of the world. Second, it will be argued that

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[14] Evans, C. Stephen, "Moral Arguments for the Existence of God", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/moral-arguments-god/>.

[15] While it might seem redundant to talk about "human persons" to some, it is not. There are two reasons for this: 1) this term is being used as it was used in its Medieval context. Human person as opposed to angelic and divine persons. 2) The term person can only mean the same as human in a naturalistic context, in which humans are no more transcendent than some evolved animals. Historically, the term person has a strong metaphysical and transcendent baggage, unless it is assumed that humans do not have the transcendence that we want to give to them by this term, which could evidently only be accomplished by begging the question on the part of the naturalist. While the philosophical naturalist can state that it I who is begging the question, all I could say to that is that the term person as used in history tends to favor my position, at least from the point of view of history of anthropology in the West.

moral nihilism is far more implausible than moral realism. And, finally, it will be suggested that moral realism is consistent with (and even required by) classical theism and its view on the dignity and worth of the human person. Therefore, the argument will look something like the following:

1) Either naturalism is true or non-naturalism is true. (They cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense).
2) If philosophical naturalism is true, it implies some form of moral nihilism (non-realism).
3) Ethical realism is far more plausible than any form of moral nihilism.
4) Since nihilism seems false, ontological naturalism is implausible as a general worldview
5) Given that naturalism is implausible, it seems more reasonable to postulate some non-naturalist framework for which moral realism seems fit.
6) It will be suggested that general framework to be that of classical theism.

Before it be suggested that the above argument does not follow deductively, due to the impropriety of interchanging plausibility with truthfulness and implausibility with falseness, it is important to realize that the above sketch is just that, namely, a sketch. Furthermore, the argument that will be presented in what follows should not be taken as a deductive kind of argument. Rather, the purpose of this work is to show the implausibility of naturalism to account for moral facts. And, this will be done in terms of what has been recently called in the literature "an inference to the best explanation". Therefore, a knock-down, deductive argument should not be expected and will not be needed to accomplish this task.

Now, the analysis will be divided into three main chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter 1, some important terms will be defined in order for them to constitute the preliminary foundation and theoretical background knowledge of the analysis to follow. In this chapter, the main focus will be related to the understanding of what contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophers call metaethics as opposed to normative and applied ethics. In this sense, it will be necessary to distinguish between moral ontology, moral epistemology and moral semantics. While these are all important terms for the moral debate, throughout this work, the main analysis and assessment will be oriented towards moral ontology, considering moral epistemology and moral semantics as somewhat peripheral or secondary to the study of naturalism as a plausible foundational framework to account for

the moral realm. Moreover, it will be attempted to define naturalism and moral realism as these terms will constitute the basis of the assessment of the main argument in this work. Along with those definitions, it will be imperative to explain roughly what methodology will be followed throughout this work, especially focusing on abduction as a reasonable method to approach the question. Also, it will be extremely important to explain the main problem that one needs to deal with when evaluating this debate, and this will be done in terms of the analysis of the question of "Why should I take the moral point of view?". It will be seen that this question is not to be thought of in terms of a moral sense of the word "should", rather the "should" that this question is meant to be raising is a rational sense of the word "should". This is an important point because, if the word "should" be meant as a moral "should", the question seems tautological and question-begging. Nevertheless, if the word "should" be taken in the sense of a rational "should", then the entire work's analysis and overall purpose will be justified and will constitute the foundation upon which the remaining work will be built. Finally, it will be pointed out the intricate relationship between one's metaphysical outlook and its axiological implications, in terms of human dignity and morality.

Chapter 2 will be intended to try to understand the naturalist position in order to see whether it does in fact entail some form of moral nihilism or not. In order to attain this analysis, three things will be done. First, a succinct sketch of some naturalists who hold that naturalism entails moral nihilism will be surveyed. Second, an analysis of the metaphysical implications of evolutionary theory in the context of contemporary naturalism will be evaluated. This will be extremely important for the analysis, due to the fact that, for most naturalists, "evolution is the only game in town" and, in principle, capable of explaining morality.[16] Therefore, while, *stricto sensu*, a naturalist could be a naturalist and not assent to the evolutionary theory, in very practical terms, one does not often find naturalists who do not assent to the latter.[17] Then, it will be assessed whether contemporary philosophical naturalism can account properly for meaning, morality, and human dignity, in light of the metaphysical and anthropological implications previously analyzed. In this sense, naturalism does not seem fit, as a robust enough worldview, to give a plausible account of moral realism. Thus, after the comparison, it will be concluded

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[16] Cf. Linville, M. D., "The Moral Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 394-395.

[17] Philosophies or religions like Buddhism are beyond the scope of this analysis. While some might argue that Buddhism might qualify as naturalism without evolutionary theory, it has certain elements that a strict naturalist would probably not agree with. Ergo, this study will be primarily focused on the most prominent and strict forms of naturalism in contemporary analytic philosophy.

that without the element of transcendence in human beings (which naturalism cannot account for while classical theism can), moral nihilism does in fact follow as a metaphysical implication.

Finally, the last section of this second chapter will be focused on trying to provide a plausible alternative to naturalism, appealing to classical philosophy, on the one hand, and to Christian theism's conception of the human person, on the other hand. In this sense, the concept of *imago Dei* in Christian theism will be a fundamental starting point for analyzing and looking at the transcendence that human being's own constitution and ontological structure call for. In order to undertake this assessment, two points will be considered. First, a brief historical survey on the naturalists contributions to the moral arguments for the existence of God will be sketched, showing how, given the structure of the argument up to that point, the conclusion seems to follow naturally. In the last part of the chapter, the overall value of this sort of argument will be evaluated, considering the contemporary resurgence of natural theology in the Anglo-Saxon philosophical environment. Second, it will be attempted to demonstrate that naturalism is insufficient to answer the question of "Why should I be good?", given its overall understanding of the world and human beings in it. Thus, it will be shown that naturalism remains an implausible view, as opposed to classical theism, whose general framework provides the necessary preconditions for answering the "Why should I be good" question, in terms of the rational should.

Chapter 3 will be focused primarily on answering some of the most common objections raised against the moral arguments for the existence of God from both naturalists and theists alike. Five main objections will be answered. First, it will be shown that the common confusion between epistemology and ontology tend to blur the force of the moral argument. Second, the necessary-truths challenge of contemporary analytic philosophy and Platonism coming particularly from Richard Swinburne will be answered. Third, the supervenience of "moral properties" challenge will be answered. Fourth, the famous Euthyphro's dilemma that has been commonly raised against moral arguments for the existence of God will be answered. Finally, a long and important discussion will be undertaken in terms of classical ethics, teleology and the well-being of human beings. This is especially relevant due to the direct challenge that Mark Murphy has levelled and the indirect challenge that people like Phillipa Foot and Michael Thompson have also raised.

Finally, some conclusions and final reflections will be stated, concerning the implications of philosophical naturalism for contemporary philosophy. Furthermore, it will be vital to emphasize here the importance of adopting the moral point of view with a rational justification for doing that (not just a moral one). In this sense, it will be pointed out that both classical philosophy and Christian theism should be considered again as possible allies to reflect upon some of the still-existent consequences of the legacy of logical positivism that took place in the past century in the philosophical thinking of many nowadays. It will, then, be suggested that perhaps some answers to the philosophical enigmas of this era could be found before David Hume.

CHAPTER 1: SEMANTIC DISTINCTIONS AND IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

1.1 Definition and Criteria of Ethics

As always, it is important and necessary to define one's own terms. Without a proper understanding of the terms and issues at stake, it will be futile to try to solve any problem, because any problem would be considered a pseudo-problem by someone if it is not properly defined. Therefore, this seems like a good *prima facie* justification to begin the first part of this text with some definitions of the problems and terms.

Whatever considerations one brings into the discussion of any philosophical inquiry should attempt to be accounted for systematically and rationally, and they should be related to their object of study in light of the totality (i.e., the hermeneutical horizon of meaning, the context of discovery, etc.). Nevertheless, it is vital to try to understand the notion of ethics as intricately related to both common pre-philosophical knowledge, insights and intuition related to what is right and wrong, and as an inquiry related to one's conception of the human person. Thus, without a proper understanding of the voluntary, intellectual, emotional, and axiological aspects of the human person, one's conception of ethics will be astoundingly inadequate. For this reason, ethics has certain anthropological presuppositions that should become more explicit for the sake of both clarity and candor.

In this same line of thought, it is important to notice that morally right or wrong actions should be ascribed only to human persons as free agents. This is an important classical distinction that should be kept in mind, that is, there is a difference between human acts and man's acts, classically understood. Man's acts are all acts that human beings perform involuntarily, like those related to digestion, breathing, etc.; human acts are acts that are performed by human beings in terms of their free will and intelligence. Thus, while the former acts are involuntary, the latter are completely voluntary and imputable to human beings as such.[18] In this sense, Professor Ángel Rodriguez-Luño clearly states that morality should be understood in those same terms:

> What is moral, understood generically as opposed to the amoral (not to immoral), designates the specifically human way of governing actions. This specific way of governing is necessary because, contrary to what happens with other living beings, human actions do not instinctively and automatically accommodate to the reality in which man lives and to the objectives that are convenient to him; he has to adjust them himself, prefixing his ends and projecting the way to carry them out…What is moral (in the generic

[18] In this particular section, the word "man" is understood to mean mankind or humankind. This distinction is a Medieval distinction that wants to point out that the difference is found in terms of liberty or freedom. It is not gender specific insofar as it is meant to be applicable to both men and women in this context.

> sense) and what is freely done have exactly the same extension. All free actions, and they alone, are moral; all moral actions, and they alone, are freely done. All what man freely is (just or unjust, generous or egoistic) and all that is done deliberate and freely is part of the moral field.[19]

With those considerations in mind, Rodriguez-Luño states that Ethics is directly directed to morality, and morality is "a quality that corresponds to human acts exclusively in virtue of proceeding from freedom ordered towards an ultimate end, and that determines the consideration of an act as good or bad in a very concrete sense, not extensible to non-free acts or movements."[20] Some aspects of this definition will be explained later on. Now, although this work is related to ethics, it needs to be pointed out that this is a work related primarily to the metaphysical foundation of ethics. However, it is extremely important to understand, at least in general terms, the nature of ethics. In this sense, analytic philosophers J.P. Morland and William Lane Craig provide another good definition of ethics in terms of morality:

> Ethics can be understood as the philosophical study of morality, which is concerned with our beliefs and judgments regarding right and wrong motives, attitudes, character and conduct. When an ethicist studies morality, certain value concepts are the center of focus: "right," "wrong," "good," "bad," "ought," "duty," "virtuous," "blameworthy" and so on.[21]

Despite what might seem a very straightforward definition, it is very important to recognize that many of the words used in ethics can have a non-ethical connotation. In other words, certain concepts should be understood analogically. For instance, one may argue that given the evidence that the sky has a grayish color to it, one "ought" to believe that it will rain very soon. Also, it could be argued by a serial killer that shooting a person is a "good" way to kill that person. Nevertheless, neither one of those two words are being used in their moral sense. Rather, the former is being used in the rational sense of "ought", while the latter is being used in the useful sense of "good". In this sense, it seems necessary to define what constitutes the morality of certain terms. Then, in other words,

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[19] Rodriguez-Luño, Á., *Ética general*, Pamplona: EUNSA, 2010, p. 21. (This translation is mine).
[20] Rodriguez-Luño, Á., *Ética*, Pamplona: EUNSA, 1991, P. 17. (This translation is mine).
[21] Craig, W.L. & Moreland, J.P., *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Wisconsin: Inter Varsity Press, 2003, p. 393.

what are the criteria to affirm that some term is being used in the moral sense of it? When is one justified in attributing morality to any given term?

In the context of freedom being a precondition for morality, Moreland and Craig provide some criteria to analyze moral terms and statements. They establish four general criteria for a term to be rightly considered a moral term: 1) authority, 2) prescription, 3) universality, and 4) human flourishing. First, moral terms and moral statements (*a fortiori)* should be regarded as authoritative. This means that moral statements have an overriding power over etiquette, customs, and even positive laws.

Second, moral statements must be prescriptive, not merely descriptive. Thus, moral statements should recommend human actions beyond the mere description of them. In other words, moral statements tend not to be so much a matter of what people do; rather, they tend to be more related to what people ought to do. While it is important to notice that not all of morality is deontic—for there are some non-deontic yet axiological elements to moral statements—it is certainly a good general criterion to determine whether a particular statement is a moral statement or not. Nevertheless, given this analysis, it must be understood that, while all prescriptive actions have a moral element, not all of morality is constituted and structured in terms of prescriptive statements.

Third, moral statements are universal in nature, i.e., they must apply to all persons in "relevantly similar situations". The main point of this criterion is to specify that one act cannot be right, while the exact same act is wrong, without citing a relevant difference in the situation analyzed. This criterion aims to get rid of arbitrariness when judging moral statements and situation. In other words, morality is not arbitrary or an expression of personal feeling. If a moral statement is true, it is, then, relevant to all cases that fit the conditions upon which the initial claim is based. Therefore, if a given act is wrong, given the absence of sufficiently strong, different conditions, then the act will continue to be wrong.

Fourth, moral statements are related to proper human flourishing and dignity. This is a vital point, and very much in agreement with the classical understanding of ethics. Now, while this criterion points directly to human beings as the recipients of morality, this does not mean that non-human animals are not the appropriate objects of moral concern. Nevertheless, even though this is the case, morality is primarily a human

enterprise insofar as they are the only worldly beings that possess abstract rationality and freedom to self-determine their own actions.

Now, having considered these four important criteria, William Lane Craig and Mark Murphy add three extra criteria that should definitely be taken into account, due to the importance for the subsequent analysis: objectivity, other-directedness and the good *simpliciter*.[22] While objectivity could be related to universality, and some have suggested that other-directedness might be understood in terms of human flourishing, these should be distinguished for the sake of the analysis that follows.[23] Furthermore, some have suggested that, without a correct understanding of the "good *simpliciter*" and its relationship to other-directedness, the step from prudential goods to moral goods is theoretically impossible.[24] Therefore, it will be necessary to look briefly at those three other extra criteria.

The fifth criterion is the objectivity criterion, which (though related to the criterion of universality) does add a further understanding of the nature of morality. Objectivity means that an action is morally right or wrong for anyone independently of whether that person believes it to be so or not. In other words, torturing children for fun is wrong whether people recognize it as such or not, independently of the torturer's feelings and thoughts towards the action itself.

Sixth, morality should be understood in terms of other-directedness, i.e., when one talks about an action being right or wrong, this should most of the times be understood in relationship to other people. For the full comprehension of this particular feature, Murphy´s comments are worth quoting at some length:

> The domain of the moral is *other-directed*: At least some of the states of affairs that are morally valuable or actions that are morally obligatory bear directly on other people and their well-being, and we are morally responsible for not caring adequately for or not fully complying with our obligations toward these others. When we say, then, that the relief of suffering is morally valuable, we are saying that for all human beings, the relief of suffering is something that there is reason to care about and to work toward. When we

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[22] Cf. Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009, p. 122.
[23] Craig, W.L. & Moreland, J.P., *op. cit.*, p. 393.
[24] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit*, p. 178.

> say that it is morally obligatory to refrain from killing the innocent, we are saying that all human beings have strong, even decisive, reason to refrain from killing the innocent.[25]

Finally, the seventh criterion is what has been called by some the "good *simpliciter*". It will be extremely necessary to understand this term, due to its significance for the debate of whether naturalism is good enough as an ontological foundation for morality and dignity. This becomes an important issue insofar as classical ethics defenders are concerned. According to Craig morality needs to be understood at some point as good or bad actions *per se*:

> It seems to be a distinctive property of moral goodness that it is desirable for its own sake…not that it is other-directed rather than self-directed, but that it is desirable in and of itself. As such, it is utterly distinct from prudential value, which…is always relative.

Even though some might argue that this seems like a very Kantian way of understanding ethics, it will be especially relevant if one wants to be an appropriate account of supererogatory acts, i.e., morally praiseworthy actions that are such in virtue of having gone "beyond duty". Therefore, this last criterion will play an important role in the debate of the ontological foundation of morality.

At any rate, if one wants to know sufficiently well what is taking place in the contemporary analytic debate related to metaethics, getting a general grasp of these criteria seems fundamental for such undertaking. However, it is important to point out that, even though the seven criteria provided above are not completely exhaustive, they do constitute a *conditio sine qua non* of ethics in general. While it could be argued that these are not sufficient conditions for ethics (which is itself a non-self-evident statement), it seems like a fact beyond dispute that these are, at the very least, necessary conditions for morality, which is all of what the argument in the following pages will need. Therefore, if it can be shown that naturalism cannot provide an adequate account for some of these necessary criteria, then naturalism, as far as a good enough worldview to explain morality, will be in trouble.

1.2 Analytic Divisions in Ethics

After it has become clearer what ethics is and what some of the criteria for determining whether certain terms and statements are moral or not, it is important to try to define some further categories in order to understand what this work's thesis is about, and what it is not about. Therefore, it is vital to distinguish between different parts or sub-

[25] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

divisions that are relevant to the field of ethics. These distinctions, despite what some people might think, are not superfluous. On the contrary, the right understanding of these distinctions will be likely the basis upon which the subsequent critique of naturalism and the postulation of non-naturalism as the ontological foundations of morality will rest.

In this sense, there are at least four different areas related to the study of ethics that can be identified: normative ethics proper, applied ethics, metaethics and descriptive ethics. Two of them (normative ethics proper and applied ethics) are normative; the other two of them are nonnormative (metaethics and descriptive ethics).[26] While all of these divisions are interesting and relevant to the discussion, the main aim of this work will be primordially metaphysical in nature, and, therefore, focused on the nonnormative elements of morality more than in the normative elements of morality. Nevertheless, it will be attempted to provide an elementary and basic sketch of each field in as much as these are related to the subject matter to some extent.

1.2.1 Normative Ethics Proper and Applied Ethics

As it was stated above, there are two main normative divisions in the field of ethical theory: normative ethics proper and applied ethics. It will be the purpose of this section to try to shed some light on the distinctives of each of these disciplines. In this vein, according to Craig and Moreland, normative ethics proper should be understood as a discipline that "seeks to formulate and defend basic moral principles, rules, systems and virtues which serve as guides for what actions ought or ought not to be taken, what motives ought or ought not to be embraced, and what kinds of persons we ought or ought not see to be."[27] In this sense, normative ethics proper should be distinguished from moral facts *per se*. An analogy with the philosophy of science might be useful to illustrate the point. There are scientific facts, and there are scientific theories. Scientific theories attempt to provide an explanation of scientific facts by providing certain conceptual models that account for the scientific facts in a consistent, parsimonious, and plausible way. Likewise, there are moral facts, and there are moral or ethical theories. Ethical theories attempt to provide an explanation of moral facts by providing certain conceptual models that account for moral facts in a consistent, parsimonious, and plausible way.[28]

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[26] Craig, W.L. & Moreland, J.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 396-397.

[27] Ibid., p. 397.

[28] I owe the credit of this helpful analogy to Dr. Martin Castro-Manzano. I first heard it from him in a private conversation.

(about psychology, happiness, human conventions…)? And how do we learn about the moral facts, if there are any? These questions lead naturally to puzzles about the meaning of moral claims as well as about moral truth and the justification of our moral commitments. Metaethics explores as well the connection between values, reasons for action, and human motivation, asking how it is that moral standards might provide us with reasons to do or refrain from doing as it demands, and it addresses many of the issues commonly bound up with the nature of freedom and its significance (or not) for moral responsibility.[31]

This branch of philosophy is further subdivided in at least three different main categories: moral ontology, moral epistemology, and moral semantics. These three subdivisions are intricately related to the two main tasks of metaethics: meaning and justification.[32]

According to Craig and Moreland, metaethics focuses primarily on two main areas of investigation. The first area of investigation is related to the meaning and reference to moral concepts and statements. This, of course, is directly related to moral semantics. This is important in order to understand the different metaethical theories that have been proposed, which include both non-cognitive and cognitive theories of metaethics. A cognitive theory of metaethics is one that affirms that moral statements can be true or false; a non-cognitive theory of metaethics denies that moral statements are indicative of statements that can be true or false, insofar as these are not related to extra-subjective states of affairs.

For example, two of the most important non-cognitive metaethical theories are emotivism and metaethical prescriptivism. Both theories claim that moral statements are not related to objective facts or states of affairs about the world; rather, non-cognitivists would claim, these are only related to the subject who exteriorizes and internal (subjective) feeling or way of thinking.

Emotivism refers to the view that the meanings of "right", "wrong", "good" and "bad" are nothing but expressions of personal feelings. Some would consider that this is the view that would have been held by David Hume, for instance. On the other hand, prescriptivism is the view that moral statements are essentially commands given to people in order to guide their lives, but they have no cognitive meaning. This would probably have been held by some of the verificationist philosophers like A.J. Ayer. It can be

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[31] Sayre-McCord, Geoff, "Metaethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/metaethics/>.

[32] Cf. CRAIG, W.L. & MORELAND, J.P., *op. cit.*, p. 396.

submitted that neither one of these views can account for humans' universal moral experience. Furthermore, even though many of the philosophers who have held such positions were naturalists, this work will not be concerned with non-cognitivist naturalists, in general, for it is precisely the main point of this work to maintain that, in the absence of a metaphysically robust worldview, it will be impossible to affirm objective moral values, duties and meaning in the cognitivist sense of those words. Therefore, non-cognitivists would agree with the propounded thesis that will be defended in this paper (at least one aspect of it).

On the other hand, the second area of investigation is related to the justification and structure of moral reasoning. This sort of investigation attempts to look for the correct methodology and, more importantly, worldview needed in order to justify moral terms and statements. Moreover, philosophers who study metaethics wonder whether the warrant and justification for morality is the same as the one used to justify theories in the natural sciences. Is natural reason enough to justify morality, or is one in need of some sort of special irreducible faculty or intuition of moral properties? These are some of the questions that metaethics needs to settle.

Now, once it has been grasped, in general terms, what metaethics is all about, it becomes necessary to explain in a little more detail what the three subdivisions mentioned above mean. In other words, it will be vital to define moral semantics, moral epistemology, and moral ontology. First, moral semantics is related to the first task of metaethics, namely, trying to determine the exact meaning of moral terms and statements. Again, this is an extremely important task, especially in light of the analogical character of many moral terms. For example, as it has been stated above, the word "good" can mean prudential goodness, metaphysical goodness, physical goodness or moral goodness. In the first case, prudential goodness can be understood to be a particular action, event or instrument that benefits the person to whom the prudential good is referred. In the second case, metaphysical or ontological goodness is referred to a particular being that exists, in opposition to non-existent entities. Physical goodness is a good related to material benefits in a corporeal entity (e.g., health, food, etc.). And, finally, a moral good is one related directly with humans' free wills and their actions.

Second, moral epistemology is the discipline that studies how human beings *know* whether some action is right or wrong. In this sense, those who study moral epistemology attempt to find the causes of the human knowledge of good and bad. For this reason, moral epistemology can be related to beliefs and the formation of those beliefs. It can also

be related to the normativity of knowledge, the phenomenology of knowledge, epistemic duties, internalism, externalism, justification of the psychological mechanisms to acquire moral intuitions, etc.

Finally, the third subdivision is that of moral ontology, which studies primarily the nature, structure, constitution, and existence of moral properties and values. Walter Sinnot-Armstrong puts in these terms: "Meta-ethics also includes moral ontology, which asks about the metaphysical status of moral properties and facts, if any. There are also debates about how to define morality as opposed to self-interest, religion, law, custom, and so on."[33] In other words, while moral epistemology asks the question of *how* one can know what right and wrong are, moral ontology asks the question about *whether* there is such a thing as right and wrong objectively.

These three metaethical distinctions will turn out to be determinative in order to formulate the adequately the argument proposed in this work. As it has been stated in the introduction, this work aims to try to argue in favor of two general metaethical theses, namely: 1) philosophical naturalism cannot provide an adequate justification for affirming the objective, ontological existence of moral values, moral dignity and ultimate meaning of life, and 2) classical theism in the context of classical philosophy is plausibly the best candidate to explain the existence of moral values, moral dignity, and ultimate meaning of life.

Therefore, it is important to distinguish between moral ontology and moral epistemology.[34] This work does not aim to show that, in the absence of *belief* in God, one could not *know* right from wrong; nor is the aim to argue that without *belief* in God, people would *behave*, in practice, in completely immoral ways. Rather, the general argument will try to show that the very existence of objective morality provides reasons to postulate a far more plausible worldview than philosophical naturalism upon which to found objective morality, i.e., classical theism in the context of the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview and philosophy of life.

1.3 Defining Naturalism, Moral Realism, and Abduction

Before the discussion about the metaphysical foundations of ethics can proceed, it will also become extremely relevant to attempt to explain three important terms that

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[33] SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG, WALTER., "Moral Skepticism and Justification," in *Moral Knowledge?* ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 4-5.
[34] Cf. Ibid.

will be used throughout this work: naturalism, moral realism, and abduction. This aspect is important for several reasons. First off, if one is to argue that naturalism can or cannot provide an ontological foundation for ethics, there is an inexorable need to know precisely what is meant by the term "naturalism", or at the very least some of its constituent elements. Otherwise, it could very easily be argued that one is attacking some sort of strawman, a belief system that really nobody holds to be true. Second, if the argument holds that naturalism cannot account for moral realism, it will do no good to the argument to refer to "moral realism" if there is not a clear referent of the term. Third, the main claim that this work is focused on is to show that plausibility of the argument, not the deductive necessity that follows from it. In order to do this, one must clarify and, at least in general terms, justify this sort of approach. Ergo, it will also be necessary to define "abduction" in somewhat general terms, as well as the other two concepts in question.

1.3.1 Naturalism

In the first place, it must be understood that, contrary to what one might think to be the case *prima facie*, naturalism in not a univocal concept at all. Rather, it is full of different nuances, and there are more sophisticated naturalisms than others. Thus, it should be considered that "naturalism" is an analogical term. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of meanings, this work is based upon the belief that all naturalisms are based upon certain minimal beliefs that they all share in common. Moreover, if these minimal points of agreement among naturalists can be arrived at, that will suffice to justify the argument that will take place in the following pages.

In this sense, one needs to look for those minimal points of agreement to obtain a proper definition of the concept of naturalism. In order to do this, two steps will be taken. First, some arguably authoritative descriptions of certain components of naturalism will be introduced; and second, some general remarks will be made with the intention to qualify the general relevance of certain descriptions. Ultimately, while one might attempt to find a unified concept of naturalism, if the critic wants to point out that there can be an exception to the general description that is being provided, the burden of proof will be presumably on the critic's part to show that the concept is lacking some essential aspects. Nevertheless, that will probably not damage the overall argument, as the argument will be referred back to the particular meaning that is being exposed here.

Having stated that, it will be enlightening to read a very vivid depiction of what the contemporary naturalist view of the world presumably is. It will be shown, later, that the naturalist's conception of the world has natural anthropological implications, which,

in turn, has tremendous logical and theoretical implications for morality. Twentieth century philosopher Bertrand Russell describes human beings and the world they inhabit in the following terms:

> Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.[35]

This seems to be roughly the world that naturalists imagine themselves to be in. While one must not confuse naturalists with of the twentieth century logical positivists, there are certain similarities that can be perceived in some ways. And, as it will be show in the future this Russellian world must still be at bottom presupposed by naturalists. One of the most outstanding features that both groups share is their overall tremendous appreciation of the methods of modern natural science. Most naturalist philosophers attempt to make philosophy so closely related to science as to make them almost indistinguishable one from the other. And, most importantly, "naturalists" are often contrasted with "supernaturalists" in so far as the former claim not to accept the reality of any non-natural entities. Naturalist philosopher David Papineau puts it in the following terms:

> [Naturalist] philosophers aimed to ally philosophy more closely with science. They urged that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing "supernatural", and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit"...The great majority of contemporary philosophers would happily accept naturalism as just characterized—that is, they would both reject "supernatural" entities,

[35] RUSSELL, B., Mysticism and Logic, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1917, pp. 47-48.

and allow that science is a possible route (if not necessarily the only one) to important truths about the "human spirit".[36]

Given this description, it is also relevant to specify three more aspects of ontological naturalism. First, while it might be very evident that God would definitely be catalogued as a "supernatural entity", it is probably important to emphasize, for the purposes of this work, that ontological naturalism implies necessarily non-theism, at least as a negation of how classical theism has been understood in the history of philosophy.[37] Thus, naturalism should be understood throughout this work akin to how Plantinga understands it:

> Naturalism obviously entails atheism; it is stronger than atheism, however, in that there are varieties of atheism—classical Platonism and Stoicism, for example, and perhaps the idealism of the young Hegel—it excludes. Henceforth I'll use 'naturalism' to de-note this variety of metaphysical naturalism, though what I say will be applicable in various degrees to other sorts of naturalism, epistemological, metaphysical, and nonpropositional.[38]

Second, most ontological naturalists tend to try to reduce all phenomena (of all kinds) to physical entities or some sort of. As Papineau clearly states:

> A central thought in ontological naturalism is that all spatiotemporal entities must be identical to or metaphysically constituted by physical entities. Many ontological naturalists thus adopt a physicalist attitude to mental, biological and other such "special" subject matters. They hold that there is nothing more to the mental, biological and social realms than arrangements of physical entities.[39]

Third, while naturalism does not necessarily imply a broadly Darwinian, evolutionary account of the origin of species *per se*, nowadays it is probably the only plausible option for naturalists. Therefore, throughout this work, following Mark D. Linville, the presumably natural and logical combination between naturalism and the evolutionary theory will be referred to as evolutionary naturalism, due to the fact that this work will attempt to show the implausibility of evolutionary naturalism as a whole.[40]

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[36] Papineau, D., "Naturalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/naturalism/>.

[37] This is part of why it is important to distinguish ontological or philosophical naturalists from merely methodological naturalists. While some methodological naturalists are theists, no ontological naturalists are theists in the classical sense of the term.

[38] Plantinga, A., "Naturalism, Theism, Obligation and Supervenience", in *Faith and Philosophy* Vol. 27 No. 3 July 2010, p. 251.

[39] Papineau, D., op. cit.

[40] It is important to point out that evolutionary naturalism is the view that will be rejected, which does not imply *ipso facto* the rejection of evolutionary theories as scientific theories or as scientific accounts of human beings' evolution *per se*.

Now, of course, while the implausibility of evolutionary naturalism does not entail the implausibility of naturalism in and of itself, currently there does not seem to be any other route to take for the committed naturalist. Linville provides certain interesting and relevant insights in this respect, in the context of his argument Against Evolutionary Naturalism:

> Off the bat, one might note that the falseness of [evolutionary naturalism] is not thereby an argument for the falseness of naturalism, and the latter is the real target of such arguments. Might one be a naturalist without being an evolutionary naturalist? Does naturalism entail Darwinism? Strictly speaking, it seems possible to affirm the worldview of naturalism without also endorsing the scientific theory of evolution, and so there is no strict entailment. But as Alvin Plantinga, a theist, and Alex Rosenberg, a naturalist, agree, for the naturalist, "Darwinism is the only game in town." Indeed, Richard Dawkins was recently seen sporting a T-shirt that read, "Evolution: The Greatest Show on Earth, The Only Game in Town." Perhaps Dawkins's shirt reflects his more careful comment elsewhere that, "Although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist"...Before Darwin, the inference to Paley's Watchmaker seemed natural, if not inevitable, given a world filled with things "that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose"...Naturalism *sans* Darwinism—like Tarzan *sans* loincloth—is lacking in essentials. It is a worldview at a loss for explanation. While it is conceivable that a critic...might object by driving a wedge between the worldview and the theory, we will retain the focus on the evolutionary version of naturalism.[41]

Therefore, it will remain very important to keep these elements of naturalism in mind as the main question of this work unfolds in order to avoid imprecisions. Probably the elements described above contain a minimal amount *sine qua non* elements that probably all naturalists could agree with, including both Russell's depiction of the universe and man, and Papineau's general description of naturalism. One of the main questions that this works attempts to provide an answer to is that of whether naturalism, as it stands nowadays, contains a metaphysically robust worldview to account for morality as such.

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[41] LINVILLE, MARK D., "The Moral Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 395.

1.3.2 Moral Realism

The next term that needs to be understood is that of moral realism. Like naturalism, there might not be a consensus regarding all of the implications of moral realism. However, probably there is a description with which most moral realists would agree. Geoff Sayre-McCord describes moral realism in these terms:

> Taken at face value, the claim that Nigel has a moral obligation to keep his promise, like the claim that Nyx is a black cat, purports to report a fact and is true if things are as the claim purports. Moral realists are those who think that, in these respects, things should be taken at face value—moral claims do purport to report facts and are true if they get the facts right. Moreover, they hold, at least some moral claims actually are true. That much is the common and more or less defining ground of moral realism (although some accounts of moral realism see it as involving additional commitments, say to the independence of the moral facts from human thought and practice, or to those facts being objective in some specified way).[42]

Thus, the main premise of the moral realism that will be defended in the following pages includes essentially two main propositions. First, there are such things as moral facts. In this sense, as it has been stated above, the work is not aimed at interacting with non-cognitivist naturalists, because it will be precisely the main argument of this work to show that, without postulating the existence of God as the ultimate metaphysical ground of morality, it will be implausible to maintain moral realism. In consequence, non-cognitivist metaethical theories would be the most plausible and broadly logical result of the denial of the framework of classical theism and classical philosophy (and not subject to the criticism of this work). As Sayre-McCord states:

> As a result, those who reject moral realism are usefully divided into (i) those who think moral claims do not purport to report facts in light of which they are true or false (noncognitivists) and (ii) those who think that moral claims do carry this purport but deny that any moral claims are actually true (error theorists). [43]

For this reason, the main argument will be focused on naturalists who are willing to affirm both naturalism and morality (in the moral realism sense of the word). Rather, it will be maintained that naturalism implies either error theory or some sort of ethical nihilism, which for the purposes of this work will be taken to mean roughly the same.

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[42] Sayre-McCord, Geoff, "Moral Realism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/moral-realism/>.
[43] Ibid.

Second, throughout this work it will be maintained that in order for moral realism to be a cogent position, it will be inevitable to also hold to the objectivity of moral facts. While some might think this proposition to be self-evidently true in a trivial sense, it will be hugely important to maintain this distinction in mind. As it has been stated previously, objectivity must be understood as the truthfulness of a particular proposition, independently and regardless of whether anyone claims it to be true or not. In other words, if a moral proposition is objectively morally good, this means that the proposition will continue to be morally good even if no one ever claims it to be true.

Again, without keeping in mind these two aspects of moral realism, the ulterior argument will most likely be missed. Therefore, moral realism should be thought to entail both real facticity and objectivity.

1.3.3 Abduction

It is a generally agreed upon fact that the great pragmaticist American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce was the first philosopher to have coined the term "abduction" in his work on the logic of science.[44] Since then, the term has been frequently used in academic circles as one of the three most important forms of inference, along with deduction and induction. Now, historically (even though the textual evidence does not seem conclusive) it seems that C.S. Peirce used the term in the context of the discovery of a hypothesis. In other words, his view of "abduction" seems to be more related to a hypothesis than a justification. Nevertheless, recently philosophers have started to use the term abduction a little more leaning towards the latter meaning than towards the former. As Igor Douyen writes:

> In the philosophical literature, the term "abduction" is used in two related but different senses. In both senses, the term refers to some form of explanatory reasoning. However, in the historically first sense, it refers to the place of explanatory reasoning in *generating* hypotheses, while in the sense in which it is used most frequently in the modern literature it refers to the place of explanatory reasoning in *justifying* hypotheses. In the latter sense, abduction is also often called "Inference to the Best Explanation."[45]

While it seems unnecessary to generate a very strong distinction between these two senses of the word—for the manner in which the modern term of abduction is used

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[44] Cf. Supplement to Douven, Igor, "Abduction", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction/>.

[45] Douven, Igor, "Abduction", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction/>.

seems to imply the postulation of a hypothesis—this work will take primarily the more modern term of abduction, as simply meaning "Inference to the best explanation".

In this sense, it is important to distinguish between deduction, induction and abduction, so that it is possible to get a more accurate grasp of the methodology that will be used throughout this work. The main difference between deduction, on the one hand, and induction and abduction, on the other hand, is a matter of necessity. First off, deduction is a logical inference that safeguards the truth of the premises in the conclusion necessarily. In other words, in deductive reasoning, given the truthfulness (and valid structure) of the premises, the conclusion will follow with logical necessity. Thus, when it comes to deductive reasoning the conclusion preceded by the premises will either be necessarily true or necessarily false there is no middle ground in deductive reasoning. If all *A*s are *B*s, and all *B*s are *C*s, it will follow logically and necessarily that all *A*s are *C*s.

Second, when one talks about induction, it is important to note that the necessity talk as well as the absolutely true or false talk disappear. Inductive inference is more concerned with probability, given a limited number of examples of a particular phenomenon. Induction is, for example, the kind of inferential reasoning that is used when analyzing statistical-like information. At least for the purposes of this work, it will suffice to have that basic understanding of induction. Igor Doven point out that even though the nature of induction is more complex than the explanation just provided, it suffices as a contrast to abductive reasoning:

> Inductive inferences form a somewhat heterogeneous class, but for present purposes [of understanding the contrast with abduction] they may be characterized as those inferences that are based purely on statistical data, such as observed frequencies of occurrences of a particular feature in a given population. An example of such an inference would be this: 1) 96 per cent of the Flemish college students speak both Dutch and French. 2) Louise is a Flemish college student. Hence, Louise speaks both Dutch and French.[46]

Although it might be relevant to know that some people consider induction as a kind of abduction, due to its ampliative feature, usually they are distinguished, as Doven accutely points out, in terms of the appeal to explanatory considerations:

> It should also be mentioned that Harman...conceives induction as a special type of abduction... The mere fact that an inference is based on statistical data is not enough to classify it as an inductive one. You may have observed many gray elephants and no non-

[46] Ibid.

gray ones, and infer from this that all elephants are gray, *because that would provide the best explanation for why you have observed so many gray elephants and no non-gray ones*. This would be an instance of an abductive inference. It suggests that the best way to distinguish between induction and abduction is this: both are *ampliative*, meaning that the conclusion goes beyond what is (logically) contained in the premises (which is why they are non-necessary inferences), but in abduction there is an implicit or explicit appeal to explanatory considerations, whereas in induction there is not; in induction, there is *only* an appeal to observed frequencies or statistics. (I emphasize "only," because in abduction there may also be an appeal to frequencies or statistics, as the example about the elephants exhibits.)

Therefore, when one talks about deductive reasoning, the jargon should be in terms of completely true or completely false (depending on validity and soundness); when one talks about inductive reasoning, the terms to be used are related to probability, i.e., a conclusion will be more probably true than false or vice versa; and finally, when one is discussing abduction, the relationships should be understood in terms of more plausible or less plausible. In other words, if, for instance, a particular theory or model can account for more nicely with the observed facts and phenomena than an opposing theory or model, then it is said that one has an epistemic duty to follow the most plausible theory or model.

Ergo, this is the way abduction will be understood in the following pages. It will be argued that morality is far more plausible in a non-naturalist framework than naturalism, due to the fact that non-naturalism can account for people's moral intuitions in a moral realism sort of way that naturalism simply cannot. In this sense, this work will follow the abductive line taken by people like David Bagget and Jerry Walls, which characterize the matter in the following way:

> In a recent written dialogue I (Dave) had with Erik Wielenberg, he characterized my position at one point like this: the best explanation of moral facts entails God's existence. This is not the best way of putting the matter, though; an abductive moral case for God's existence, even if successful, does not entail God's existence. At most it provides us some reason to think that God exists. Nor would a successful abductive case for secular ethics entail God's nonexistence. So the current question we are considering is what best explains the objective existence of human dignity and value?[47]

[47] Baggett, D., and Walls, J., *God and Cosmos, Moral Truth and Human Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 133.

1.4 Reasons for Adopting the Moral Point of View

Before beginning the main analysis of morality and naturalism, it will be very important to analyze what philosophers have called "the moral point of view". All positions regarding the meaning of life need to ask the question of "the moral point of view." This is probably the main and most relevant issue for the subsequent steps of the argument to make sense and, ultimately, to succeed. The question for the adoption of "the moral point of view is equivalent to the question of "Why should I be moral?", and without a correct understanding of the issues underlying this question, the problem of moral realism and naturalism will not make sense either. Dr. Joseph Porter Moreland states what adopting the moral point of view amount to:

> If one adopts the moral point of view, then one does the following: he subscribes to normative judgments about actions, things (persons, the environment), and motives; he is willing to universalize his judgments; he seeks to form his moral views in a free, unbiased, enlightened way; he seeks to promote the good. In other words, if one adopts the moral point of view, one submits to and seeks to promote the dictates of normative, universalizable morality in a mature, unbiased, impartial way. One embraces the dictates of morality and seeks to live in light of the moral point of view. Such a viewpoint governs his life and priorities. So understood, the question "why should I be moral?" becomes the question "why should I adopt the moral point of view as a guiding force over my life?"[48]

Moreover, the question for the moral point of view distinguishes between motives (which are psychological in nature) and reasons (which are epistemic in nature). Motives are not necessarily rational. For example, one could be motivated to adopt the moral point of view because the person does not want to dishonor the family, or the person might just be wanting to "fit in" society. Nevertheless, reasons are related to the epistemic justification that one has for adopting the moral point of view. So, while both reasons and motives play an important role in the context of understanding the whole question, usually there is a bigger emphasis on the epistemic justification that relates to reasons for adopting the point of view.

In like manner, it is supremely important to understand what the word "should" is referring to in the context of this question. That is, the question "Why should I be moral?" is not using the word "should" in the moral sense of the word, because, if that were the case, then the question would be merely committing the fallacy of *petitio principi* at best,

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[48] Moreland, J. P., *Scaling the Secular City, A Defense of Christianity*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987, p. 113.

or self-contradicting, at worst. If the word "should" were referring to a moral "should," the question would be arguing already from within the moral point of view, which would be a contradiction. The only possible answer that could be given to the question "Why should I be moral" would be "because I should". Moreland masterfully explains the problem at hand:

> If a moral "should" is used in the question, then some philosophers think that the question involves a pointless self-contradiction. For one is then asking for a moral reason for accepting moral reasons. In other words, if one is using a moral "should" in the question, then one is already reasoning from within the moral point of view, since one is already willing to acknowledge a moral answer to a moral question. But if one has already adopted the moral point of view, then there is not much point in asking for a moral reason for doing so. About the only answer one could give to the question would be that it is just morally right to adopt the moral point of view. But if one is willing to adopt the moral point of view because such an act is morally right, then one has already adopted the moral point of view without knowing it. So [sic] the question "why should I be moral?" is not really using a moral sense of "should," and if it is, the only answer is that such an act is just the morally right thing to do.[49]

With that in mind, one wonders what the right way of interpreting the word "should" is, especially in light of the fact that it cannot be moral sense of "should". Clearly, the answer must be given in terms of the rational sense of should. In this sense, one is not asking the question of why one should be moral from within the moral point of view, but from outside of it. Again, the question has epistemic connotations, as it is related not to motives but to reason for adopting the moral point of view as an overall rational life plan. Professor Moreland sums it up very well:

> But there is a different notion of "should" which is better suited as a part of the question. This is a rational sense of "should." According to this sense of "should," one is not asking the question "why should I be moral?" from within the moral point of view, but outside the moral point of view altogether. In other words, one is asking the question "what rational justification can be given to me as to why it would be reasonable for me to adopt the moral point of view rather than some other point of view (say, an egoistic self-interested point of view where I govern my life for my own best interests without regard for the moral point of view at all)." As I seek to formulate a rational life plan for myself, a well thought-out, reasonable approach to the way I will live my life so as to be a rational person, why should the moral point of view be a part of that rational life plan?... In sum,

[49] Ibid., p. 113.

the question "why should I be moral?" is asking for the motives, but more importantly, the reasons why someone should adopt the moral point of view as a part of a rational plan of life.

The issue of the moral point of view will return several times in the work that is here presented. The question "Why should I be moral?" is the question that every worldview needs to answer, including both naturalism and classical theism. If ontological naturalism cannot provide a justification for adopting the point of view, that will make *ipso facto* naturalism far more implausible to adopt than other non-naturalist positions, particularly that of classical theism.

1.5 The Axiological Character of Morality and Its Relationship to Human Dignity

Finally, after having clarified the terms that will be used throughout the rest of this thesis, it should be noted the three elements that will be implicit during the entire analysis: moral values, moral meaning and human dignity. The question regarding evolutionary naturalism and its compatibility with the moral realm will help to provide insights into the question of moral values. The analysis both explicit and implicit of the justification of the moral point of view will help to answer the question about meaning.

Nevertheless, it should be clearly pointed out that the question of morality can hardly be pressed without presupposing certain anthropological elements that constitute the human person a such. In other words, it seems that whatever metaethical conclusion that can be drawn will necessarily need to be contrasted with the *prima facie* phenomenological understanding that one has with regards to the human person.

It is the contention and main presupposition of this research that, if a particular theory seems plausible in virtue of its explanatory power with regards to the different experienced phenomena, in different ways, but it undermines the dignity of the human person, the dignity of the human person should be regarded as far more intuitive than any philosophical system, whether it be naturalism or any other system. The human person must be valued in and of itself, and whatever worldview can better account for that value has some very important competitive advantages.

CHAPTER 2: PROBLEMS WITH ONTOLOGICAL NATURALISM AND THE MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

2.1 Moral Skepticism in History: Hume, Nietzsche, Sartre, John L. Mackie

Once some of the basic terms that will be used throughout this work have been properly defined in the previous section, one must point out that one of the major premises of the argument that will be defended in this work (i.e., that within naturalism it is implausible to speak of objective morality as such) has a long history of defendants. The premise that naturalistic atheism cannot account for objective moral values, human dignity and meaning in an objective sense has been previously defended by some naturalistic atheists themselves, including great thinkers like David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, John L. Mackie and some others.

In this section, it will be attempted to briefly trace and delineate some of the basic propositions and arguments that have been given in the history of moral reasoning before undertaking a criticism on the contemporary understanding of the relationship between morality and God. In this sense, the expositions of the thinkers are meant to be merely preliminary remarks that will generate the proper context in which the subsequent arguments will be rehearsed.

David Hume

The empiricist and skeptical Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) was probably one of the most famous philosophers of the modern era. Furthermore, he was one of the most important proponents of a non-cognitivist, emotivist approach to ethics, which followed naturally from his metaphysical skepticism. It should be remembered what Hume stated verbatim:

> When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[50]

Given this famous statement, in which he affirms that anything that is not mathematics or experience of a sensible kind should be thrown into the fire, it seems to follow logically the thesis that there cannot be such things as objective moral values (since they cannot be perceived sensibly). It is commonly held that Hume was an emotivist, precisely because he thought what ultimately moves human beings to act "morally" is not some sort of mathematical reasoning; rather, a mathematical reasoning can, in principle,

[50] Hume, D., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 120.

show people the alternatives, but the will acts ultimately only in terms of desires and passions.[51] In this sense, it could be argued that, given Hume's *ante litteram* positivist epistemology, he could not have gone beyond the senses to look for a basis of his moral reasoning. In this sense, it should be noted that, when Hume tries to give a naturalistic account of morality, he is mainly dialoguing with Hutcheson (a non-naturalist), which would have given an interesting and important place to God as the ontological originator of human beings' moral intuitions. Furthermore, William Morris and Charlotte Brown explain what this entails with more detail in terms of the overall project of Hume:

> The real problem, however, is that Hutcheson just claims—hypothesizes—that we possess a unique, original moral sense. If asked why we have a moral sense, his reply is that God implanted it in us. Although in his critical phase Hume freely borrows many of Hutcheson's arguments to criticize moral rationalism, his rejection of a God-given moral sense puts him on a radically different path from Hutcheson in his constructive phase. One way of understanding Hume's project is to see it as an attempt to naturalize Hutcheson's moral sense theory. He aims to provide a wholly naturalistic and economical explanation of how we come to experience the moral sentiments that also explains why we approve of the different virtues. In the course of explaining the moral sentiments, Hutcheson's idea of an original moral sense disappears from Hume's account of morality.[52]

While some ontological naturalists might think that Hume was mistaken in his emotivist and non-cognitivist approach to morality, what should definitely be emphasized here is Hume's intention to be an epistemologically consistent naturalist. And, while not all epistemological (or methodological) naturalists are ontological naturalists, all ontological naturalists are epistemological (or methodological) naturalists (as stated above), which will play a role in the criticism levelled against ontological naturalism later throughout this work.

Now, granting that Hume is not claiming morality to be non-existent, he is claiming that morality can be reduced to human beings' subjective feelings or sentiments. Here again Morris and Brown explain Hume's understanding of morality in the "constructive phase" of his own thought:

> Hume turns to his constructive task of providing a naturalistic explanation of the moral sentiments. He refers to them as feelings of approval or disapproval, praise or blame,

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[51] Cf. Morris, W. E. and Brown, C. R., "David Hume", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/hume/>.
[52] Morris, W.E. and Brown, op. cit.

> esteem or contempt. Approval is a kind of pleasant or agreeable feeling; disapproval a kind of painful or disagreeable feeling. In several key passages, he describes the moral sentiments as calm forms of love and hatred. When we evaluate our own character traits, pride and humility replace love and hatred.[53]

In this sense, it should be noticed that "sympathy" plays a role in Hume's understanding of morality in general, which is an emotionally loaded term. The question for Hume would be whether his non-congitivist and non-objective approach to morality does not greatly misrepresent human beings' moral intuitions insofar as value judgments are not always related to feelings. Moreland levels three objections to non-cognitivism in general. First, as it has been just stated, moral judgments can occur in the absence of feelings. Second, "emotivism and imperativalism imply that there is no such thing as moral education (since there is no cognitive information to learn) and there is no such thing as a moral disagreement".[54] And third, "some moral statements seem to stand in logical relations with other moral statements."[55] This means that propositions like "I have a duty to do A" logically implies that "I have a right to do A" or "I can do A". Nevertheless, it seems hard to see how emotions can have the logical connection implied by such statements.

To be fair, according to Morris and Brown, Hume does attempt to provide a general framework from which to judge certain actions in terms of something similar to the moral point of view:

> Hume argues that moral love and hatred spring from sympathy, but only when we regulate our sympathetic reactions by taking up what he calls "the general point of view". There are two regulatory features to the general point of view. The first is that we survey a person's character from the perspective of the person and his usual associates—friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. We sympathize with the person and the people with whom that person regularly interacts and judge character traits in terms of whether they are good or bad for these people. Second, we regulate sympathy further by relying on general rules that specify the general effects and tendencies of character traits rather than sympathizing with their actual effects…By putting together these two regulatory features, we arrive at Hume's idea of the general point of view,

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[53] Morris, W.E. and Brown, op. cit.
[54] Moreland, J. P., *Scaling the Secular City, A Defense of Christianity*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987, p. 109.
[55] Ibid, p. 109.

> which defines a perspective from which we may survey a person's character traits that we share with everyone.[56]

In any case, two very relevant problems remain for Hume's understanding of morality. The first problem that arises is the question of whether to adopt the moral point of view in Hume's case seems without an answer, given his (anti-)metaphysical understanding of human beings' nature in general. Given Hume's worldview, there is nothing like metaphysical "natures" that can, *ex hypothesi*, have an intrinsic normative teleology, like in Aristotle's view.[57] Furthermore, despite his appeal to something somewhat equivalent to the Aristotelian *phronesis*, it was Hume himself who raised the famous *ante litteram* naturalistic fallacy, i.e., how can one go from the description of certain feelings in oneself to the prescription of those very feelings (and not others)? Given the Scottish philosopher's anti-metaphysical presuppositions, it seems dubious that he would be able to find a cogent and consistent answer that question.

If the quasi-consequentialist reading that Morris and Brown are doing of Hume is right, then the second problem that Hume faces is the determination of certain feelings as good apart from the social paradigm that happens to be prevalent at any given point in time. In other words, what would grant in a non-relativistic way that human being's feelings of pleasure are right, while others' feelings are wrong? Who is to say that the feeling of displeasure towards a morally evil person is right and not the sadomasochist's feeling of pleasure for an action? Can the feeling of pleasure be equated to goodness *per se*? These questions remain, and the answer does not seem to lie in some minor nuances of the position of Hume. Rather, they seem to be the logical entailments of Hume's naturalism.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) popularized and coined the phrase "God is dead". Historian of philosophy Sir Anthony Kenny characterizes him in the following terms:

> During the twentieth century Nietzsche had a great influence in continental Europe, especially upon Russian literature and German philosophy. His opposition to submissive morality and to democratic socialism made him popular among Nazis, who saw

[56] Morris, W.E. and Brown, op. cit.

[57] This position will be analyzed more carefully in chapter 3.

themselves as developing a race of superior humans. Partly for this reason, he was long neglected by English-speaking philosophers; but in the latter part of the century, ethicists in the analytic tradition came to realize that his onslaught on traditional morality needed to be answered rather than ignored.[58]

In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche himself advocates for the non-objectivity of values insofar as they are not given to us *de facto*. For the German philosopher, values are created by human beings themselves. He affirms boldly the creation of values:

> Whatever has value in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less—but has rather been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters! Only we have created the world *that concerns human beings*! But precisely this knowledge we lack, and when we catch it for a moment we have forgotten it the next: we misjudge our best power and underestimate ourselves just a bit, we contemplative ones. We are neither as proud nor as happy as we could be.[59]

In the same vein, Victoria Camps reminds her readers that Nietzsche directs many of his vitriolic attacks directly towards Christianity (as well as to Platonism) as such. She makes clear that even though the German philosopher was not suggesting to live without any sort of ethic, he definitely did not see himself as a moralist, but one who was recovering the values that were originally those affirmed by the brave and strong ones. She states the following:

> For Nietzsche, the object of all of these criticisms is not to put an end to morality, but to see its face as it is, unmasking it and making manifest the motivations that boost it...The question, nonetheless, is the following: Can morality really keep itself up after having taken away all of its masks? Do Nietzsche's criticisms not lead to the simple destruction of all morality by the procedure of revealing that that which appeared to be superior is as low as everything else?[60]

It is important to point out that Nietzsche's *Madman* seems to be the logical conclusion of his own philosophy.[61] European values are based on Christianity's values, which in turn are "rooted in weakness, fear, and malice. Its dominant motive is what he calls *ressentiment*, the desire of the weak for revenge on the strong, which disguises itself

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[58] Kenny, A., *A New History of Western Philosophy, Vol. 4: Philoosphy in the Modern World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 33.
[59] Nietzsche, F., *The Gay Science*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 171 (aphorism 301).
[60] CAMPS, V.., *Breve historia de la ética*, Barcelona: RBA, 2013, p. 303. (This is my translation).
[61] Cf. Introduction

as a wish to punish the sinner".[62] In spite of the apparent psychological and philosophical irrelevancy that some ontological naturalists might think Nietzsche's position has, it is astoundingly interesting to note MacIntyre's words:

> Ever since belief in Aristotelian teleology was discredited moral philosophers have attempted to provide some alternative rational secular account of the nature and status of morality, but that all these attempts, various and variously impressive as they have been, have in fact failed, a failure perceived most clearly by Nietzsche. Consequently Nietzsche's negative proposal to raze to the ground the structures of inherited moral belief and argument had, whether we have regard to everyday moral belief and argument or look instead to the constructions of moral philosophers, and in spite of its desperate and grandiose quality, a certain plausibility - unless of course the initial rejection of the moral tradition to which Aristotle's teaching about the virtues is central turned out to have been misconceived and mistaken. Unless that tradition could be rationally vindicated, Nietzsche's stance would have a terrible plausibility.[63]

Consequently, given Macintyre's insightful comment, it would be a good *caveat* for the naturalists not to discard some of Nietzsche's theses so promptly. The German philosopher's position should be taken seriously. Moreover, neither the naturalist nor the non-naturalist can build a coherent worldview that accounts for the moral facts that human beings perceive without answering to Nietzsche's moral challenge.[64]

Jean-Paul Sartre and John L. Mackie

Another important thinker who analyzed the nature of morality in its relationship to Christian theism was French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). It seems that Sartre was able to see the consequences of his naturalist position, particularly as it relates to God and morality. In his famous conference "Existentialism is a humanism", he states an answer to one of the objections to existentialism in the following terms:

> The third objection, stated by saying, "You take with one hand what you give with the other," means, at bottom, "your values are not serious, since you choose them yourselves." To that I can only say that I am very sorry that it should be so; but if I have excluded God the Father, there must be somebody to invent values. We have to take things as they are. And moreover, to say that we invent values means neither more nor less than

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[62] Kenny, A., op. cit., p. 238.
[63] MacIntyre, A., *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 256.
[64] Cf. Introduction.

this; that there is no sense in life *a priori*. Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose.[65]

In this sense, it seems quite evident that, for Sartre, in the absence of God, there is no further meaning to life other than that which one gives to one's own life. This, in turn, implies that morality is not in some sort of Platonic moral realm. This view coheres well with the Russellian world that was depicted above. In such a world, there is nothing beyond atoms in collisions. Similarly, in the Sartrean description of the world, we are thrown off to existence itself, and there is nothing to the world except for what human beings make out of it.

It is interesting to compare this particular view with the anti-realist error theory espoused by J.L. Mackie (1917-1981). According to Richard Joyce, the error theorist has roughly the following position:

> Understanding the nature of an error theory is best done initially by example: It is the attitude that sensible people take toward phlogiston, that levelheaded people take toward astrology, that reasonable people take toward the Loch Ness monster, and that atheists take toward the existence of gods. An error theorist doesn't believe in such things; she takes talk of such things to be a load of bunk. The *moral* error theorist doesn't believe in such things as moral obligation, moral value, moral desert, moral virtue, and moral permission; she takes talk of such things to be bunk. This much allows one to get a fairly good intuitive grasp on the error theoretic position, though the details of how the stance should best be made precise are unresolved.[66]

Roughly speaking, moral error theorist positions imply the non-instantiation of moral properties in the actual world, due to the lack of a real moral category that moral properties are an instance of. While they may not deny the strict intelligibility of moral talk, they claim morality, as understood by moral realists, is simply false (even though it is not unintelligible as in A.J. Ayer and other neo-positivists would have claimed). In this sense, error theories are not non-cognitivist positions. However, it is interesting to note the similarity of their positions in some respects.

Another interesting aspect of Mackie's position is his view of the "queernees" of moral properties, which was one of the two most important arguments provided by Mackie in support of moral error theory, along with the relativistic argument. Let us

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[65] Sartre, J-P., "Existentialism is a humanism" in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, Meridian Publishing Company, 1989, p. 367.

[66] Joyce, Richard, "Moral Anti-Realism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-anti-realism/>.

delineate the argument, beginning with the latter, and then proceeding to explain the former. The following summary will be taken mainly from the Joyce's supplement to "Moral Anti-Realism" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

The first argument that Mackie provides in support of error theory is the argument from relativity (or from moral disagreement). The argument begins by stating some allegedly empirical observations regarding different cultures as they relate to objective morality. In other words, given that it is observed that there are different cultures that have different norms and values, then it is far more plausible to postulate the non-objectivity of the moral realm instead of postulating that some cultures and societies have some sort of epistemically privileged status that allows them to access the realm of moral values more easily than their counterparts. This argument, nonetheless, seems to have been greatly opposed after deeper analysis of the cultures in question insofar as they all share some values at a very deep fundamental level.[67] However, the challenge still needs to be taken into account by the naturalist.

The second argument presented by Mackie (and probably the most famous one) is the "argument from queerness", and it can be analyzed under two different aspects: an epistemological aspect and an ontological aspect. On the one hand, the ontological aspect states that moral properties have very strange features in reality; they have a certain "queerness" to it, which is some sort of mysterious and bizarre properly that is attached to agents who are claimed to have moral properties. As Plantinga states:

> According to John Mackie, it would be strange, queer, weird (given naturalism), if there were such a thing as genuine and objective moral value. It would be queer if some actions had this property of being just plain wrong, where this wasn't definable or analyzable in terms of such naturalistic properties as what people like, or want, or desire, or naturalistic conditions of human beings having to do with pleasure, length and quality (another value term) of life, and the like. [68]

On the other hand, if it is true that moral properties have this "queerness" to it, the epistemological problem emerges immediately, namely, trying to find some cognitive apparatus or faculty that would, in principle, be capable of apprehending these moral properties (and values). Joyce describes the epistemological/ontological problem in the following terms:

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[67] This has been magnificently presented at the popular level from a non-specialist in *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis.

[68] Plantinga, A., *op. cit.*, p. 251.

> The [ontological aspect] states that our conception of a moral property is essentially one of a very unusual kind of property, such that countenancing its instantiation requires us to posit in the world "qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe"...The [epistemological aspect] states that in order to track such weird properties we would need "some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else"...These are not independent arguments, since we are forced to posit weird epistemological equipment only if it has already been established that the properties in question are weird.[69]

It is interesting to consider Mackie's "queerness" talk in light of the contemporary discussion on the "supervenience" of moral properties. It was once remarked by Plantinga that adding the word "supervenience" before a natural property does not *ipso facto* provide an explanation of the non-natural entity that is trying to be explained.

In this sense, while the mere allusions to the philosophers above do not provide a compelling argument *per se* for the incompatibility of ontological naturalism and moral realism, they do point out certain innuendos and insights that will be useful for the analysis that will be made in the next section. Consequently, in the following section, two arguments will be provided to argue against naturalism as a worldview that can account for the moral realm. The first argument will constitute the ontological criticism that has been meant to be undertaken as one of the major premises of the overall argument, while the second one will be epistemological in nature.

2.2 Contemporary problems with ontological naturalism

Having understood some of the general positions espoused by previous thinkers in the history of philosophy regarding this issue, it will be vital to attempt to analyze what seems to be some of the most fundamental deficiencies found in the position of contemporary, ontological naturalism. At this point of the discussion, it should be patently clear that the main tenet of ontological naturalism that should be taken into account for the following analysis is its affinity (indeed, its necessary connection) with philosophical atheism and the Russellian picture of the world outlined above. Apart from these two assumptions, it will also be presupposed that the Russellian picture of the world implies—

[69] Supplement in Joyce, R., *op. cit.*, "Mackie's Arguments for the Moral Error Theory".

due to the current state of scientific inquiry—some sort of evolutionary theory.[70] Mark Lindville established it in the following terms:

> Strictly speaking, it seems possible to affirm the worldview of naturalism without also endorsing the scientific theory of evolution, and so there is no strict entailment. But as Alvin Plantinga, a theist, and Alex Rosenberg, a naturalist, agree, for the naturalist, "Darwinism is the only game in town.[71]

Thus, what will be attempted in the following pages is to undertake a criticism of ontological naturalism on two different fronts: an ontological one and an epistemological one. While the latter criticism might seem odd to the reader at first, given the insistence on this not being *primarily* an epistemological argument, the nuances that will be attributed to the position should provide sufficient reasons for clarifying this situation.

At any rate, the argument will proceed roughly in the following terms. First, the metaphysical and anthropological implications of naturalism will be analyzed. Second, the epistemological implications of the conjunction of naturalism and the evolutionary theory will be analyzed. Third, some brief answers to some of the main objections to the arguments will be rehearsed, which will be greatly expounded in Part 3 of this work. And, finally, it will be attempted to provide a positive proposal for grounding morality and meaning—assuming the failure of some of the fundamental theses of ontological naturalism to provide a sufficient grounding for morality—on the basis of a Judeo-Christian theistic framework.

2.2.1 Evolutionary Naturalism and Its Metaphysical and Anthropological Implications

In October of 2001, at Franklin and Marshall College, American professors Paul Kurtz and William Lane Craig debated on the topic *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough?*. During this debate, Professor Kurtz argued that it is possible and even plausible to affirm morality without appealing to God's existence in any way, mainly due to the fact that there are many people who do not believe in God and, nonetheless, behave morally. On the other hand, Professor Craig argued (following Michael Ruse's analysis)[72]

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[70] Here it is important to point out two things. First, the following criticism is aimed at a position that conceives the evolutionary theory in atheistic terms alone. This has been reiterated several times. Second, the criticism that follows applies only for an evolutionary theory conceived in atheistic terms, and the argument does not imply the falsity of the evolutionary theory *per se*. Rather, it implies the incompatibility of the evolutionary theory with atheism.

[71] LINVILLE, M. D., "The Moral Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 394.

[72] Cf. quote in the Introduction.

in sociobiological terms that, without God's existence and the cosmic framework that that entails, *homo sapiens* have no real ontological warrant or justification for claiming that morality is anything other than an evolutionary adaptation and, ultimately, a very convenient illusion that allows for reproductive success.[73]

J.P. Moreland and W. L. Craig established the argument deductively in the following terms elsewhere:

> [Premise 1:] If God did not exist, objective moral values and duties would not exist.
>
> [Premise 2:] Objective moral values and duties do exist.
>
> *[Conclusion:] Therefore, God exists.*[74]

While Professor Craig provided a deductive, *modus tollens* form of the argument for God's existence on the basis of moral values, moral duties and moral accountability, it might be suggested that the same could be done in abductive terms. Indeed, it seems plausible that Professor Craig himself thinks his arguments in these terms often throughout his debate. In any case, instead of focusing on Premise 2 of Craig's argument (which will be taken for granted throughout the rest of this work due to the reasons stated above), the main focus of the work is on trying to provide an abductive justification for Premise 1. There are two main reasons for doing this: 1) the immediacy of morality as such and 2) the agreement for this argument coming from non-cognitivist naturalists.

First, it can be argued that, while the existence of God is apprehended mediately, i.e., in terms of different arguments (both of a metaphysical and moral nature) the apprehension of moral truths *per se* is immediate, i.e., they present themselves to the knower as intuitively and pre-philosophically true; so much so that, as it was stated above, these phenomenological moral intuitions are *prima facie* more justified than both theism and ontological (atheistic) naturalism. It is only retrospectively, and making a philosophical analysis, that people can come to hold more strongly the justification for them or the lack thereof.

Second, as it has been stated above, the naturalist who holds that there are no objective moral truths would probably agree with the argument outlined by Moreland and Craig.[75] However, such naturalists would infer a *modus ponens* form of the argument

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[73] Cf. Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

[74] Craig, W. L. & Moreland, J.P., *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Wisconsin: Inter Varsity Press, 2003, p. 495.

[75] Some evidence for this has been provided in Evans, C. Stephen, "Moral Arguments for the Existence of God", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/moral-arguments-god/>.

rather than the *modus tollens* form of it. In this sense, it is important to reiterate that the argument of this work is attempting to show not that naturalism is logically inconsistent in itself, but rather that naturalism in conjunction with objective morality, meaning and human dignity is an extremely implausible view to take.

Given that this prolegomenon has been clarified, it will be attempted to reconstruct the criticism (in ontological terms) that has been levelled against naturalism by people like J.P. Moreland, David Baggett, Jerry Walls, and William Lane Craig. Nevertheless, in order to do this, while the analysis will rely on different authors' analyses, the general outline presented, in virtue of its strong and simple organizational structure, will rely mainly on the one presented by Professor Craig in his debate with Professor Kurtz. Nevertheless, one should remember at all times that the argument is meant to lead to a plausible conclusion in terms of abductive reasoning, not a necessary conclusion in terms of deductive reasoning.

Presentation of the onto-anthropological argument

Roughly, Craig presents his argument for the first premise in terms of three main elements: moral values, moral duties and moral accountability. While many of these analyses overlap at several points, he treats them separately. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the work's main goal will be related to the analysis of moral values and moral accountability, while dealing with moral duties only peripherally, due to its complexity (which would go beyond the scope of the present work).[76]

The question of objective moral values arises indubitably when one analyzes the nature of morality in general. Professors Craig and Moreland explain what is meant by objective moral values:

> To say that there are objective moral values is to say that something is right or wrong independent of whether anybody believes it to be so. It is to say, for example, that Nazi anti-Semitism was morally wrong, even though the Nazis who carried out the Holocaust thought that it was good, and it would still be wrong even if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in exterminating or brainwashing everybody who disagreed with them.[77]

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[76] To some extent, this is the reason why nothing like Divine Command Theory (DCT) will be defended in this work. While they are very important and brilliant defendants of the DCT thesis, the analysis of such position would take too much space. Furthermore, it is be suggested that one could very easily adhere to the general conclusions of this work without having to accept DCT as William Lane Craig and Robert Adams present it.

[77] CRAIG, WILLIAM L. & MORELAND, J.P., *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*...p. 491.

This plain and succinct description provides the kind of moral values that Jean-Paul Sartre would agree to reject vehemently as a non-existent fiction, due to the fact that there is no supreme *Logos* to think of these moral values eternally nor is there something like a Platonic realm of ideas in which these very values can subsist. The question here is whether ontological naturalist can transcend the realm of mere prudential values to moral values.[78]

Given this understanding of moral values, the following question should be the following: What are the necessary preconditions for the objective truth of objective moral values? It is not being asked at this point whether the person *believes* there are objective values nor is it being asked, at this point, the *cognitive process* by which a person comes to know the objectivity of moral values; rather, it is being asked for the very foundational and ontological status of moral values. Undoubtedly, regardless of how one answers this question—assuming that the person making this claim adheres to the objectivity of moral values—it seems inevitable that the respondent will ultimately arrive at some form of belief in the dignity of the human person, and, consequently, something like Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative, urging one to treat the human person always as an end of absolute and priceless value and never as a means to achieving a certain goal. This is especially so because not establishing the human person as the foundational material object of ethics will ultimately end up relativizing or instrumentalizing morality.

Now, at first glance, the statement above could seem like a contradiction. On the one hand, it had been claimed before that God is the foundation of morality. On the other hand, now it is being stated that human beings are the foundation of morality. Then, the critic could try to pinpoint a contradiction in those terms. For this reason, it is important to understand that when it is claimed that God is the foundation of morality, it is meant that God is ultimately the foundation of morality, the *ultimate cause* of human beings' dignity and value; when it is said that human beings are the foundation of morality, it should be understood that it is meant that human beings are the *proximate cause*. In other words, when human beings apprehend moral truths (which, as it has already been stated, are ultimately related to human dignity), they do so on the basis of the *prima facie* apprehension of dignity that can be recognized in people. However, once the analysis is made, one comes to realize that that dignity that has been apprehended must ultimately be founded and grounded on God himself.

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[78] Cf. Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 177.

The concept of dignity can be understood in terms of either the traditional paradigm of dignity or the contemporary paradigm of dignity. These are nuances that are definitely worth considering in some detail. The contemporary concept of dignity is non-relational and is not definable except by an ostensive definition. This way of understanding the word "dignity" is the very basis upon which United Nations documents derive human beings' rights. On the other hand, the traditional concept of dignity is related to a two-step relational process. The first step consisted of the understanding one's place in the universe (*dignitas*). The second step consisted of realizing or fulfilling fully the initial dignity. Olvier Sensen puts it in the following terms:

> Human dignity, in the *traditional* conception, is in the first place the answer to the theoretical question of the place of human beings in the universe. According to this paradigm, human beings are distinguished from the rest of nature in virtue of certain capacities they have, particularly reason and freedom. The term 'dignity' is used to express this special position or elevation. Only in a further step does human dignity gain *moral* relevance: through the introduction of a further moral premise, one is said to have a *duty* to realize fully one's initial dignity. This second stage I shall therefore call 'realized dignity', and the first stage 'initial dignity'. The *traditional* paradigm then uses a twofold conception of dignity.[79]

Furthermore, Professor José Ángel García Cuadrado adds some important additional features to the traditional conception of dignity:

> Related to the notion of person, one finds the problem of human dignity that possesses some very profound roots in Western culture. The word "dignity" designates mainly a certain "preeminence or excellence (...) by which something stands out among other beings in virtue of the value that is exclusive or proper to it." According to this, the human person is dressed up in a special dignity thanks to which it "stands out" or is "elevated" above the rest of the creation, so that man, each man, possesses an indispensable and unalienable value, very superior to any other creature in the universe. This is the fundamental idea that defines Humanism[80][81].

Therefore, the traditional concept of dignity is what one has to have in mind throughout this work, because, while the human dignity of the person is *prima facie* apprehended, it is not merely a *factum*; rather, it needs to be understood in its general

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[79] Sensen, Oliver, "Human dignity in historical perspective: The contemporary and traditional paradigms" in *European Journal of Political Theory*, 10 (1) 71-91, 2011, p.75.

[80] It should be clearly noted here that the word "Humanism" does not have the atheistic connotations that it has in the English-speaking world, e.g., *The Humanist Manifesto*. The author is referring to a Humanism more closely related to the Renaissance Humanism or even to what has been considered to be Christian Humanism.

[81] García-Cuadrado, J.A., *Antropología Filosófica*, Pamplona: EUNSA, 2010, p. 142. (My translation).

metaphysical context, which is its proper context of justification. Now, even though probably naturalists will be somewhat reluctant to adopt all of the implications of the traditional conception of dignity, due to man being seen as a having a proper place in the universe, both the traditional and the contemporary conception of dignity share the property of standing out "among the rest of the creation".[82] This is extremely important, due to the naturalist conception of human beings as not differing from non-human animals qualitatively but merely quantitatively. In other words, human beings' rationality, for example, on the naturalist scheme, is only different in degree from that of non-human animals; their awareness and self-consciousness differs from that found in non-human animals only quantitatively, as a matter of degree; and free will is a very debatable topic among naturalists, because most of them adopt some form of hard determinism (which seems to be the metaphysical implication of their worldview taken as a whole).

So, the real question is, ultimately, the following: Is it possible to account for the dignity and value of the human person in mere naturalistic terms? *That is the question upon whose response depends the success of the whole argument.* If ontological naturalism can provide the most plausible account for the value and dignity of human persons, then the moral argument for God's existence fails. Yet, if naturalism cannot account for the intrinsic value and dignity of human beings (better than classical, Christian theism)—given that human beings' moral intuitions are far more certain than the truth of naturalism—it will become absolutely necessary to postulate a quite different account and framework in order to retro-justify morality and human dignity successfully. In that sense, one will be forced to substitute the naturalistic scheme for a quite different one.

Given these specifications and nuances, it could be argued that ontological naturalism fails to account for the preconditions of morality in terms of, at least, two related elements: 1) the origin of human beings along with the challenge of speciesism and 2) the ultimate destiny of the human person. These elements will be analyzed in that order, underlining the fact that the naturalist conception of these two tends to undermine human dignity itself.

In the first place, according to the standard account of naturalism, the origin of human beings in the world is something along the lines of a Russellian world. The late Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould puts it in the following terms:

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[82] We will deal more profoundly with the question of the relationship between ethics, dignity and teleology understood in classical terms in *Part 3* of this work.

> The human species has inhabited this planet for only 250,000 years or so—roughly .0015 percent of the history of life, the last inch of the cosmic mile. The world fared perfectly well without us for all but the last moment of earthly time—and this fact makes our appearance look more like an accidental afterthought than the culmination of a prefigured plan. Moreover, and more important, the pathways that have led to our evolution are quirky, improbable, unrepeatable and utterly unpredictable. Human evolution is not random; it makes sense and can be explained after the fact. But wind back life's tape to the dawn of time and let it play again—and you will never get humans a second time...We cannot read the meaning of life passively in the facts of nature. We must construct these answers ourselves—from our own wisdom and ethical sense. There is no other way.[83]

It is interesting to notice two main propositions here. On the one hand, ontological naturalists want to affirm that human beings have dignity and value. On the other hand, they want to affirm that human beings' value proceeds from a valueless, reductionistic, and merely biochemical process that did not have human beings in mind at any point. In other words, human beings are nothing but "an accidental afterthought" of the evolutionary process, a random collocation of atoms colliding among themselves, nothing but soulless animals that evolved in an infinitesimal speck of dust, floating in unconscious space on a train of collision with other galaxies in a relatively short time, awaiting for the cold/heat death of the universe. Again, it is important to emphasize that neither the impersonal universe as a whole nor does matter in motion (ultimate reality for naturalists) ultimately care for the existence or lack of existence of human beings. The universe is not personal; matter is not self-aware; human beings were not created with a purpose "in mind". It seems manifest that chaos is the ultimate creator of all things for the consistent naturalist.

With that picture in mind, there are a series of inescapable questions that arise naturally, such as the following: What makes human beings so special and of intrinsic worth? Are human beings really special? Are human beings priceless? Are they absolutely valuable and worth it? Given this panorama, is it not rather ludicrous to claim that there is such a thing as objective moral values, duties, virtues, etc., independently of our subjective perspective? How can Ruse's challenge of morality being "nothing but an illusion" be answered from a naturalistic perspective? This is the challenge of speciesism. As Craig so ably puts it:

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[83] As quoted in ZACHARIAS, RAVI., *Can Man Live Without God?*, Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994, ch. 6.

> [H]umanists continue to treat human beings as morally special in contrast to other species. What justification is there for this differential treatment? On an atheistic view, moral values are just by-products of sociobiological evolution. Just as a troop of baboons exhibits cooperative behavior and even altruistic, sacrificial behavior because evolution has determined it to be advantageous in the struggle for survival, so their primate cousins *Homo sapiens* exhibit similar behavior for the same reason...As a result of sociobiological pressures, there has evolved among *Homo sapiens* a sort of "herd morality" that functions well in the perpetuation of our species in the struggle for survival. But on the atheistic view there doesn't seem to be anything about *Homo sapiens* that makes this morality objectively true. To think that human beings are special is to be guilty of speciesism, an unjustified bias toward one's own species.[84]

Hence, as far as the origin of human beings is concerned, inexorably the question of meaning is answered in the negative. That is, apart from the meaning that human beings decide to give to themselves, there does not seem to be any sort of meaning. One must wonder whether an arbitrary meaning is not ultimately meaningless. Furthermore, as Sartre aptly saw, if there is no God to warrant values and purpose, they must be invented by human beings. It seems to be really hard, in terms of ontological naturalism, to think of a good reason why human beings have value and dignity before what is given by themselves. If this cannot be properly justified, there does not seem to be any reason whatsoever to act for the sake of morality.

Consequently, in virtue of this picture of the world, if the naturalist wants to affirm objective moral values, he must do so before the subjective appreciation of human beings themselves. Otherwise, those "objective values" turn out not to be objective but merely subjective in nature. In this sense, there is absolutely no objective reason for adopting the moral point of view in this case scenario rather than an egoistic point of view. While some naturalists might believe that there are objective moral values, this kind of optimism does not seem to be warranted by their whole metaphysical scheme. As Paul Copan insightfully states:

> Even if such naturalists reject that humans are nothing more than accidental collocations of atoms or molecules in motion, the context problem still persists...A theistic context for human dignity and rights is far more natural and expected than a nontheistic one of

[84] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

> valueless molecules producing value. To say that value "sometimes" may emerge from valuelessness" ...reflects an ungrounded metaphysical optimism.[85]

In the second place, after understanding the general conception of human beings' reductionistic, chaotic and godless origin as it relates to the problem of speciesism, it is very important to understand a second step in order to defend the premise that, in the absence of God as an ontological foundation of morality, ontological naturalists cannot provide an adequate alternative ontological foundation; namely, that, even if ethics could be founded properly on the basis of the naturalist's worldview, the question for the motivation—in terms of accountability—for adopting the moral point of view still remains.

The main reason for this is that even if dignity-related "properties" somehow "supervene" (whatever that means), the ultimate destiny of human beings seems to be a *prima facie* defeater for living a morally virtuous and honorable life, just for the sake of morality. What is the rational justification for choosing the moral point of view over that of nihilism or egoism, for instance? If someone commanded a person to do x or y (or not to do x or y), what sort of justification can the cognitivist, objectivist naturalist provide for making such a claim? The naturalist cannot appeal to emotions, for that would compel him to affirm non-cognitivism, and it has already been said that this argument does not care about refuting non-cognitivism. The naturalist cannot ultimately appeal to some sort of social convention, for that would be paramount to a departure from objectivism and moral realism. Craig summarizes the problem during his debate with Kurtz, and it is worth quoting his words at length:

> If theism is false, what is the basis of moral accountability? Even if there were objective moral values and duties under atheism, they seem to be irrelevant because there's no moral accountability. As Dr. Kurtz writes, "There is no cosmic Prospect for the human species.... There is no metaphysical basis for hope." But if life ends at the grave, it makes no difference whether one lives as a Stalin or as a saint. As the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky rightly said, "If there is no immortality, then all things are permitted." Given the finality of death, it really does not matter how you live. Acts of self-sacrifice become particularly inept on an atheistic worldview...Such altruistic behavior is merely the result of evolutionary conditioning that helps to perpetuate the species. A firefighter rushing

[85] Copan, Paul, "Ethics Needs God" in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J.P. Moreland, Chad Meister and Khaldoun A. Sweis, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 87-88.

into a burning building to rescue people in danger or a policeman who sacrifices his life to save those of his comrades does nothing more praiseworthy, morally speaking, than an ant that sacrifices itself for the sake of the ant heap. On an atheistic view this is just stupid. We should resist the sociobiological pressures to such self-destructive activity and choose instead to act in our own self-interest. The absence of moral accountability from the philosophy of atheism thus makes an ethic of compassion and self-sacrifice a hollow abstraction. R. Z. Friedman, a philosopher at the University of Toronto, concludes, "Without religion the coherence of an ethic of compassion cannot be established. The principle of respect for persons and the principle of the survival of the fittest are mutually exclusive."[86]

Therefore, if the arguments just considered above succeed in showing that morality and dignity are less likely to make sense in naturalism, then this will provide abductive evidence in favor of postulating Christian theism as a better alternative to naturalism, given the competitive advantages of Christianity. Thus, unless naturalism can show how human dignity, meaning (in terms of accountability) and morality can still make sense in a Russellian world, then classical theism, particularly Christian theism, seems to be a far more plausible alternative, due the fact that it rests the ontological foundation for morality and dignity in God himself.

2.2.2 Evolutionary Naturalism and Its Epistemological Implications

This work could be understood in terms of a twofold task, i.e., as a cumulative moral case against naturalism and as a cumulative moral case in favor of Christian theism. In that sense, it is important to point out that, even though the most important argument is based on the onto-anthropological moral argument outlined in the last section, there is one further moral argument that is epistemic in nature that could be adduced as further evidence against the philosophical soundness of naturalism and its ability to account for the moral reality. This version of the epistemic moral argument for God's existence has been very ably defended by Mark D. Lindville (who was himself inspired by C.S. Lewis), and I will try to reconstruct and reformulate, in general terms, the argument from his own presentation of it. He calls it the Argument from Evolutionary Naturalism (AEN), and it is stated in the following way:

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[86] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 33.

1) If Evolutionary Naturalism is true, then human morality is a by-product of natural selection.

(2) If human morality is a by-product of natural selection, then there is no moral knowledge.

(3) There is moral knowledge.

(4) Therefore, Evolutionary Naturalism is false.

First of all, it is important to remember that it has been established that, even though naturalism and evolution are not necessarily connected to one another, in reality there are virtually no naturalists who hold that naturalism is true and yet evolution is false, while the inverse is not necessarily the case (there could be someone who holds that the evolutionary account of human origins is true yet believes naturalism to be false). The first premise begins by granting, for the sake of argument, the generous assumption that evolutionary naturalism is true. Then, it draws the logical conclusion that human morality is a by-product of natural selection. This seems to be a rather uncontroversial premise for the naturalist. This is so because, while the supernaturalist could appeal to something non-natural, the strict naturalist does not seem to be able to do this; he must stick to natural explanations.

The third premise should be very much uncontroversial as well, given that it has been stated from the beginning that this argument does not have non-cognitivists, nor does it have subjectivists as adversaries. Rather, this argument is aimed at naturalists who hold to some form of moral realism (objective moral values). From holding onto moral realism is usually linked to a belief in the capacities of human beings to apprehend the moral realm.

The second premise seems to be the most controversial one. Why should one think that the *origin* of human beings is relevant to whether human beings can *know or apprehend* moral truths? Even though one might be tempted to think that this is a textbook example of the genetic fallacy, it is quite important to understand very carefully the reasons that could be adduced to justify this premise.

One could begin by analyzing what has been called the Independence Thesis, which states that a given belief is independent of the origin of that belief. In order to fully understand the scope of the Independence Thesis, one could think of this in terms of the

following considerations: Let it be supposed that Jake is a very eccentric university professor, who happens to have the belief that he will have 82 students in his class this year. The reason he thinks this is so is because he happened to draw the number 82 out of a hat that contained 120 different numbers. Now, let it be further assumed that there is nothing esoteric involved in the entire process. Therefore, given this case scenario, Jake's belief in the students' attendance being 82 students is epistemically independent from what would be the actual "truth-maker" (the reality which makes the belief true) of that belief. Both the belief and the "truth-maker" are independent from each other, regardless of what the actual number of students turns out to be. In this case, one could guess that the belief in question is probably false, but the Independence Thesis would still hold even if the belief turned out to be true.

Now, it would seem that in order to generate an argument for moral skepticism in terms of the Independence Thesis, it would be necessary to do three things: 1) show what the processes of moral belief formation are; 2) understand the would-be "truth-makers" for moral beliefs; and 3) then show that these are independent from one another. This is really what the Independence Thesis has ultimately formulated. It is interesting to note that in the case of the evolutionary theory and its relationship to morality, taken analogously, this would entail that human beings' moral beliefs are probably false, because the process of moral formation and the actual "truth-makers" would be independent.

Now, the critic might say, at this point of the argument, that to show what the belief-forming process of moral truths would be beyond the mere observation that the evolutionary origin of morality. However, according to Lindville, it is not necessary to argue for the Independence Thesis:

> But we need not argue for the falseness or probable falseness of our moral beliefs. Nor is it necessary to argue for the truth of the Independence Thesis. It is one thing to suggest that there are positive reasons for asserting epistemic independence; it is quite another to say that we lack any reason for thinking that a relevant dependence relation obtains. We would have a reason for thinking there is such a relation just in case the best explanation for a person's having a given belief essentially involves the truth of that belief. One might thus argue that belief in objective moral facts is warranted only if there is reason for

thinking that a relation of epistemic dependence obtains between our beliefs and their truth-makers.[87]

In this sense, it is interesting that, while the Independence Thesis would amount to having positive reasons for believing that a given belief is false, the thesis that Lindville is advancing is far more modest. He is essentially asserting that, even if it could not be proved that the Independence Thesis is true, the naturalist would still need to justify that the opposite is the case, namely, that a dependence relation does obtain *de facto*. It would be tantamount to arguing that because classical theism is false, then naturalism is true, while there is a myriad of other options to consider. Thus, to argue that, because the Independence Thesis has not been demonstrated to be absolutely true, then the opposite is true; this would amount to committing the *ad ignorantiam* fallacy.

Furthermore, it seems very plausible to conceive the evolutionary process to have taken place giving rise to moral beliefs without these beliefs being true (as long as they are useful in terms of survival). In the evolutionary process, natural selection, in the standard account, does not favor truth *per se*; rather, it favors adaptive behavior capable of making a given species survive. There is no direct equivalence between truth and adaptation in order to survive. Again, Lindville comments on this particular situation:

> Some behaviors (feeding one's babies, fleeing from large predators) are adaptive, and others (feeding one's babies to large predators) are not. Any predisposition or prompting that increases the probability of the adaptive behavior will thus also be adaptive. A predisposition to make moral judgments or form moral beliefs enforced corresponding behaviors, and so was adaptive for such reasons. Richard Joyce asks, "Can we make sense of its having been useful for our ancestors to form beliefs concerning rightness and wrongness independently of the existence of rightness and wrongness?" The answer, he thinks, is "a resounding 'Quite possibly'".[88]

Given naturalism and an evolutionary account of morality, it does not seem to be out of proportion to suggest that morality was given to human beings by natural selection just as a surviving mechanism with no real referent in reality. Consequently, if one has moral knowledge, then one is to have warranted or justified moral beliefs. Nevertheless,

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[87] Linville, M. D., "The Moral Argument" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 396.
[88] Ibid., p. 396.

the evolutionary account of the origin of moral beliefs seems to work as, at the very least, an undercutter of that very warrant necessary for accounting for moral knowledge.

Following this train of thought, Lindville exemplifies the situation with a medical case. He asks his readers to imagine the following case scenario to illustrate the premise that it could be the case that people who suffer from jaundice appear yellow and are appeared to yellowly: Jones goes to Dr. Smith after feeling a series of various discomforts. After looking at his patient carefully, Dr. Smith realizes that Jones' skin has a yellowish color to it. At that point, Dr. Smith diagnoses Jones with jaundice. Nevertheless, after some brief time, Dr. Smith realizes that all of his patients appear yellow to him as well as once-white pills, uniforms, signs, etc. For this reason, Dr. Smith diagnoses himself with jaundice, after a very simple blood test. Therefore, the question now is whether Dr. Smith has any reason to think that Jones does in fact suffer from jaundice just for having seen Jones' skin as yellow. Apart from a proper blood test, it could be argued that Dr. Smith has found an undercutter or defeater for the belief that Jones suffered from jaundice, regardless of whether it is the case that Jones suffers from jaundice.

In conclusion, if one can show that all three premises are far more plausible than their opposites, then the conclusion that Evolutionary Naturalism is false will be a logical outcome of the syllogism. Now, while the main argument of this work rests upon the claim that Evolutionary Naturalism cannot provide an adequate onto-anthropological foundation for morality, it is definitely remarkable, in terms of an overall cumulative case argument against naturalism, that there are strong undercutters on the epistemic side of the question as well. Therefore, given the abductive nature of the overall argument of this work, both the onto-anthropological and the epistemic arguments form good objections against Evolutionary Naturalism and reason in favor of classical theism, understood in the context of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

2.3 Perennial Answer to the Problems of Ontological Naturalism: Transcendence of Christian Theism

If the arguments that have been outlined above work properly, it will constitute a significant weakening of the overall naturalist position. However, in order for the movement to be complete, it will be necessary to postulate a quite different worldview or framework capable of substituting the deficiencies found in the naturalist position. This is what could be considered to be the second part of a two-part argument, i.e., the first

part consists of showing the implausibility of naturalism, and the second part consists of providing a far better alternative: Christian theism. Supposing that the arguments exposed above, taken together, do constitute a defeater (or, at the very least, a very important undercutter) of the naturalist position, this last section will focus primarily on showing how Christian theism constitutes a position that is far more plausible than naturalism in order to account for the moral realities than human beings experience.

Following Professor Craig's exposition of the strengths of Christian theism, as presented in his debate with Professor Kurtz, it will be argued that on the basis of Christian theism, there is a far more sound foundation for morality than in evolutionary naturalism. Again, in this section we will only argue for two of the three subpoints that support this main premise: moral values (as it relates to the human person) and moral accountability.[89]

First, in terms of the onto-anthropological argument presented above, if theism is true, human beings are justified in believing both in the ontological objectivity of moral values and in the reliability of human cognitive and intellective faculties to apprehend them. In the first place, if one assumes the Christian narrative as fundamentally valid, there is an onto-anthropological foundation for moral values and dignity, for God created human being in His image (i.e., *imago Dei*), with a very determinate and special purpose, along with special features such as intellect, free will, and an inherent capacity for love. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life."[90] This confers man with a very high dignity, even beyond non-human animals, in virtue of having been created in order to have communion with God himself. Here, it is worth quoting Professor Hector Zagal at length, due to the acuteness with which he expresses this very point:

> If we introduce the creation variable in the anthropology, the panorama changes. The human being is just like God wants him. God created him with a determinate structure because the human person would thereby reach its end. Affronting the human condition hinders the person from the fullness of his vocation. Offending human beings is slapping God…The essence of an image consists of representing something. When I see it, I recognize, for example, a man, whom he represents, or a landscape, etc. It refers to something that is outside of herself. What is characteristic, therefore, of the image does

[89] Cf. Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[90] https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P2.HTM

not consist in what it is in herself, oil, cloth, frame, etc. No, what is really characteristic of the image consists of a reference jumping upon itself, showing something that is not in itself. Thus, being God's image means, first of all, that man cannot exist closed upon himself. If he tries that, he errs. Being God's image means to say: reference. It is dynamic, which puts the movement in man towards the totally other. It means the capacity of referring to something; it is the divine capacity of mankind. Consequently, one becomes more of a man when one goes out of oneself, when one is capable of calling God, You...This "creatural" anthropology does not emphasize the rationality or the capacity to dominate the instincts. The root of human being's dignity lies in his capacity to direct himself towards God, i.e., his freedom. The human being is worthy because he is loved by God and because he is capable of loving God. The initiative is divine...This creatural condition, and not the ontology of the rational faculties, is the foundation of man's dignity.[91]

Furthermore, on the Christian theistic view, God constitutes the standard of goodness, because He is the Good himself. As Craig himself states:

> On the theistic view, objective moral values are rooted in God. He is the locus and source of moral value. God's own holy and loving nature supplies the absolute standard against which all actions are measured. He is by nature loving, generous, just, faithful, kind, and so forth. Thus if God exists, objective moral values exist.[92]

Then, in the second place, if the Christian theistic position is right, then accountability and the moral point of view make perfect sense. On the theist perspective, God is personal and has made the world in an orderly fashion, having put intrinsic tendencies, ends, and purpose in creation. If God is the standard of goodness, there are good reasons to adopt the moral point of view due to two main reasons. The first reason is that morality is not an arbitrary imposition from one human being to another, and it is not merely subjective; rather, it is built into the very furniture and constitution of the world. The second reason is that ultimately good and evil will be revendicated. Craig puts in these terms:

> On the theistic view, God holds all persons morally accountable for their actions. Evil and wrong will be punished; righteousness will be vindicated. Despite the inequities of

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[91] Zagal-Arreguin, H., "Naturaleza y creación: la falacia naturalista y ética aristotélica", in *Libro Anual del Instituto Superior de Estudios Eclesiásticos*, Arquidiócesis de México, México D.F., Vol. 2, No. 5, agosto de 2003, p. 14. (Translation is mine.)

[92] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 30.

this life, in the end the scales of God's justice will be balanced. We can even undertake acts of extreme self-sacrifice that run contrary to our self-interest, knowing that such acts are not empty and ultimately meaningless gestures. Thus, the moral choices we make in this life are infused with an eternal significance.[93]

Second, in terms of the epistemic argument presented above, if God created human beings' intellects and cognitive faculties, then He created them with the intrinsic potentialities to apprehend reality (i.e., truth) as such, including moral reality. As Saint Thomas Aquinas would say, the truth in the human understanding, logical truth, would be "*adaequatio rei et intellectus*". In this case, regardless of whether the evolutionary account of human beings is correct or not, the Christian theist is in perfectly good conditions to rely on his cognitive faculties (which are not only material), because they were specifically created not only to survive but also to attain truth itself, including moral truth.

Given this very succinct summary of the Christian position, it can be concluded that it is manifest that Christian theism has some very significant competitive advantages, compared to evolutionary naturalism, both in terms of its onto-anthropological foundation of moral values and its epistemic foundation of moral truths. In this sense, if someone wants to be a moral realist, *ceteris paribus*, it is far more plausible to be an accomplished moral realist in Christian theism than it is naturalism.

[93] Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER 3: ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

3.0 Answering Objections

Once the moral argument for God's existence has been adequately presented, there are some objections that might be levelled at some of the arguments. Therefore, this last section will attempt to deal with some of the major objections that have been raised against the moral argument for God's existence. While there might be some other objections, these have been deemed to be the most relevant in the literature of the moral arguments.

3.1 Confusing Epistemology and Ontology

Perhaps one of the least sophisticated, yet most popular, objections to the moral argument for God's existence is formulated along the following lines: "I am an atheist and a naturalist, and I live a perfectly moral life without believing in God's existence." Although the proposition in question is a very simple one, it provides a perfect opportunity for clarifying an important distinction, especially because that was the approach that Paul Kurtz took in his debate with William L. Craig.[94] Now, while it is true that an epistemic version of the moral argument for God's existence has also been presented in this work, neither the epistemic argument nor does the onto-anthropological one state that it is necessary to *believe* in God in order for there to be objective moral values and duties.

On the one hand, the onto-anthropological moral argument for God's existence states that, if there are objective moral values in reality, they cannot have their ontological foundation on merely matter in motion. This is an ontological claim. What the argument does say is that it is necessary for God to exist (regardless of whether someone believes in his existence or not) in order to ultimately justify human dignity and an objective standard of morality.

On the other hand, the epistemological moral argument against naturalism is precisely that, namely, an epistemological argument against naturalism's ability to provide sufficient and necessary grounds for justifying that human beings' belief-forming process corresponds to the truth of the beliefs formed. In that sense, the argument is, in fact, related to epistemology, but it is not related to belief in God, except indirectly. As Mark Murphy states:

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[94] Cf. Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

There is nothing wrong with disambiguating an ambiguous question and then offering a persuasive answer to the particular disambiguation chosen. The difficulty is that the question with which Kurtz almost exclusively concerns himself is not a particularly interesting, live question. If we ask whether atheists can be morally good people, then on any view that is currently defended by more than a few cranks, the answer is: of course atheists can live lives that are, in large measure, morally upright, even extraordinarily admirable or heroic...What makes Kurtz's interpretation of the debate question a poor one is not that the plain sense of the debate topic rules it out, but that if there is going to be a debate, one would expect it to be on a live question about which there is disagreement between the debaters. [95]

3.2 The Supervenience of "Moral Properties" and Necessary-Truths Challenge of Analytic Philosophy

The famous philosopher of religion Richard Swinburne seems to disagree with the onto-anthropological moral argument of the sort that has been defended in this work. He reasons that moral properties are based on nonmoral properties. Therefore, in any possible world W, if a moral action *a* is morally evil, and that action has some nonmoral properties upon which the moral properties supervene, then it would follow that, any time action "a" takes place with its nonmoral properties, the moral properties would supervene in any possible world W*, thus making moral truths logically necessary. In order to understand the objection at its best, it might be worth quoting Professor Swinburne at length:

> But it must be that if there is a world W in which a certain action *a* having various nonmoral properties...was bad, there could not be another world W* that was exactly the same as W in all nonmoral respects, but in which *a* was not bad. A difference in moral properties has to arise from a difference in non-moral properties. If a certain sort of killing is not bad in one world, but bad in another world, there must be some difference between the two worlds...that makes for the moral difference. Moral properties, to use the jargon, are supervenient on nonmoral properties. And the supervenience must be logical supervenience. Our concept of the moral is such that it makes no *sense* to suppose both that there is a world W in which *a* is wrong and a world W* exactly the same as W except that in W* *a* is good. It follows that there are logically necessary truths of the form "If an action has nonmoral properties A, B, and C, it is morally wrong," and so on. If there are moral truths, there are necessary moral truths—general principles of morality...All moral truths are either necessary (of the above kind) or contingent. Contingent moral truths (e.g.,

[95] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009, p. 118

> that what you did yesterday was good) derive their truth from some contingent nonmoral truth (e.g., that what you did yesterday was to feed the starving) and some necessary moral truth (e.g., that all acts of feeding the starving are good).[96]

In this sense, before attempting to answer this objection, it might be worth remembering what the main contention is, namely, that without God there does not seem to be an ontologically stable foundation for moral truths. Thus, Swinburne contends that, at least in this sense, there is no need to postulate God as the basis of morality, because the nature of the acts themselves seem to suffice. Moreover, moral truths are not simply contingent but necessary.

Having understood this point, one can raise at least two important considerations to answer Swinburn's objection. The first answer that could be given to Swinburn's objection comes from Professor William Lane Craig's defense of the argument. Craig states that the objection that Swinburn is raising seems to beg the question, to some extent, because what Swinburn's argument would be proving is that, if moral properties do intervene on certain natural states, then they do so necessarily. However, Craig states:

> But that gives us no reason at all to think that, given a naturalistic worldview, there are any moral properties or that they supervene on natural states. If there is no God, then it is hard to see any ground for thinking that the herd morality evolved by Homo sapiens is objectively true or that the property of moral goodness supervenes on certain natural states of such creatures.[97]

Therefore, it precisely the task of the naturalist to prove that there can be objective moral truths at all in this universe without God. But, that is precisely one of the main points of the argument, namely, to request from the naturalist some warrant or justification for the claim that a godless, Russellian universe can have the kinds of moral properties supervening on nonmoral properties that they claim that it can. Given these considerations, it seems patently clear that Professor Swinburn seem to be begging the question insofar as he assumes that there are moral truths of the sort that supervene upon nonmoral truths. One could fully agree with Swinburn that *if* there are moral truths, then they are necessary moral truths. Yet, that is the very hypothesis that is being analyzed.

Now, one might say that, in reality, there is no difference between accepting the solution to the objection that Swinburn raised, because the naturalist could, for the sake of argument, grant that God exists and that he provides a basis for moral truths. But, if

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[96] Ibid., pp. 152-153.
[97] Ibid., p. 180

one grants this—they might say—then one still has to deal with the "fact" that necessary truths are of such nature that they cannot fail to be true (because that would make them contingent). Furthermore, if this is so, then moral truths would have such ontological necessity that they really would not need God. In other words, God would be, under these circumstances, superfluous for morality. This would be a second objection by Swinburne to the answer given above. Consequently, there is need to answer this second objection.

The second answer to the second objection could be given in terms of Alvin Plantinga's defense of anti-realism[98], regarding necessary truths in general. He holds to what he calls "creative anti-realism", which states the following:

> The core of creative anti-realism is the idea that objects in the world owe their fundamental structure—and, if they couldn't' exist without displaying that structure, their existence—to our creative activity…The idea is that if there were no persons (or if there were some and they didn't structure the world in the way in which we do in fact structure it) then there would be no objects in space or time, none displaying object property structure, no number of things of any sort, and the like.[99]

Of course, while this might seem to be, at first, a pretty Kantian conception of reality, it might be worth considering it specifically with regards to "necessary truths" (logical, not metaphysical), given the current state of analytical philosophy overall, where "logically necessary truth" parlance takes place often enough.[100] Moreover, when analyzed in terms of truths, this conception turns out not to be very far away from an Aristotelian conception of truth. It is worth remembering that Aristotle himself did not seem to have thought that truths could exist without a mind apprehending them, because truth is always a relationship between a knower and a thing known. Furthermore, there is a sense in which "the cause of [the truth] is not in things themselves, but in us".[101]

In this sense, Plantinga is not advocating for a full anti-realist position (*á la* Putnam or *á la* Rorty); he just states that truth is a concept that can hardly be thought apart from a thinker who holds this truth. This is hardly a new notion and is perfectly compatible with some elements of Aristotle's realism or, more specifically, Thomas Aquinas view.[102] Plantinga clearly states the issue at hand:

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[98] While the terms sound odd and slightly unfortunate, it seems that it could be compatible with some forms of what could be called "moderate realism" insofar as Plantinga is not claiming not to hold to objective reality as such.
[99] Plantinga, Alvin, "How to be an Anti-Realist", in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Sep., 1982), p. 50.
[100] It is interesting to note how it seems that some philosophers inadvertently use logically necessary truths as equivalent to metaphysically necessary truths. That is an assumption that is not taken in this work.
[101] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book II, 993b 5. (My translation).
[102] See https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/04/keep-it-simple for an interesting review on the subject of realism vs anti-realism from a Thomistic perspective written by Dr. Edward Feser.

> How could there be truths totally independent of minds or persons? Truths are the sort of things persons know; and the idea that there are or could be truths quite beyond the best methods of apprehension seems peculiar and *outre* and somehow outrageous. What would account for such truths? How would they get there? Where would they come from? How could the things that are in fact true of false—propositions, let's say—exist in serene and majestic independence of persons and their means of apprehension? How could there be propositions no one has ever so much as grasped or thought of? It can seem just crazy to suppose that propositions could exist quite independent of minds or persons or judging beings. That there should just be these truths, independent of persons and their noetic activities can, in certain moods and from certain perspectives, seem wildly counterintuitive. How could there be truths, or for that matter, falsehoods, if there weren't any person to think or believe or judge them?[103]

Interestingly enough, Plantinga states that no Medieval or Modern philosopher was a Platonist in the contemporary sense of the word; he says that it was only after Frege (if he was a Platonist) that some philosophers turned to a form of full blow Platonism. Regardless of whether that is true or not, it is important to point out that, outside of certain philosophical circles, Plantinga's views might simply seem commonsensical, and Plantinga just presents it in a philosophical manner. He seems to be saying simply that truths, including moral truths, need a thinker.

Now, if this is true (i.e., that truths require a thinker who thinks such truths), then, regardless of the logical necessity of moral truths, there needs to be a thinker.[104] Yet, since the thinkers that one apprehends in sensible experience are finite, it seems quite plausible to suggest that necessary truths can only exist in a Mind who had thought about them from all eternity as their exemplar cause. Indeed, that is Plantinga's very proposal:

> So what we really have here is a sort of antinomy. On the one hand there is a deep impulse towards anti-realism; there can't really be truths independent of noetic activity. On the other hand there is the disquieting fact that anti-realism, at least of the sorts we have been considering seems incoherent and otherwise objectionable. We have here a paradox seeking resolution, a thesis and antithesis seeking synthesis. And what is by my lights the correct synthesis, was suggested long before Hegel. This synthesis was suggested by

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[103] Plantinga, Alvin, "How to be an Anti-Realist", in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Sep., 1982), p. 67-68.

[104] While it is true that, in terms of Scholastic terminology, one could talk about both "ontological truth" as well as "logical truth", ontological truth is merely being insofar as it is knowable. However, truth in its more accurate sense is truth only insofar as it is actualized by the knower, in terms of the relationship that takes place in the act of apprehension. While ontological truth might be called truth improperly, it seems that logical truth might be called more properly truth. Furthermore, the way in which Platonist and extreme Realists defenders of logical necessary truths use the term does not refer to this Medieval distinction.

Augustine, endorsed by most of the theistic tradition, and given succinct statements by Thomas Aquinas:

"Even if there were no human intellects, there could be truths because of their relation to the divine intellect. But if, *per impossible*, there were no intellects at all, but things continued to exist, then there would be no such reality as truth." (*De Veritate* Q. 1, A. 6 Respondeo).[105]

This is suggestive comment in light of Swinburn's objection insofar as necessary truths could only exist in an eternal Intellect, in virtue of their being truths.

Finally, it is important to note that there is no contradiction in stating that necessary truths have always existed and will continue to exist in the future, on the one hand, and that they are ontologically dependent upon an Infinite, Immutable Intellect that has always thought them, on the other hand. David Baggett and Jerry Walls state as they comment of Plantinga's views:

> Plantinga's suggestion is interesting, for what he is attempting to provide here is a way to make sense of how such propositions can depend on God without their truth being subject to his control. What he therefore attempts to provide is…a nontrivial dependence relation of even necessary propositions on God other than one of control. Plantinga is not suggesting that a necessarily true proposition is true just because God believes it. Instead, he suggests that such a proposition exists in the first place because God conceives it. Propositions, on his view, are best thought of as thoughts of God. Rather than compromising the necessary existence of propositions, Plantinga's view accounts for it…These thoughts, then, are conceived by God in every possible world and hence exist necessarily. So God believes a proposition because it is true, but the proposition exists because God thinks it.[106]

These considerations seem to suffice in order to defend the moral argument that has been defended in this work from the objections that Richard Swinburn raises, for God himself is the foundation of both morality and moral truths as such.

3.3 Atheism as Perfect Piety and Moral Accountability

After analyzing Craig's argument, Professor Louise Antony finds it unconvincing and unpersuasive, particularly in regard to the accountability step of the argument. She says that to postulate ultimate moral accountability as an important part morality makes

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[105] Plantinga, Alvin, "How to be an Anti-Realist", in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Sep., 1982), p. 69.

[106] BAGGETT, DAVID, AND WALLS, JERRY., *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 90.

morality irrelevant in a very important sense, because it makes morality nothing but selfishness. In other words, if people fulfilled their moral duties only because there is a God watching over their actions, then they would not be genuinely being moral for the sake of morality, but for their own self-interest (ultimate heavenly reward). Commenting on this situation, she says the following:

> [I]t seems to me to be part of a mature sense of morality to understand that moral obligation and self-interest can conflict. It also seems to me that proper moral motivation requires acting on the basis of what is right, regardless of what is good for me. I see absolutely no reason to doubt that people do sometimes act on the basis of genuinely moral motives, and without any expectation of ultimate reward.[107]

Then, in a different place, she explains the difference that she was taught as a young girl between perfect and imperfect contrition. Thus, perfect contrition involves being sorry for having wronged God, whereas imperfect contrition involves being sorry just because of fear of God's punishment. After having made this distinction, she explains how she always felt:

> Now I had always felt that my own contrition fell short. It seemed to me that no matter how hard I tried to focus on the inherent evil of my sins, I would find myself thinking instead about what they might cost me. But now, grown up and in the throes of my religious crisis, I was struck by a perverse insight: that the perfect contrition that had eluded me hitherto might finally be achieved if I became an atheist. If I didn't believe in God, then fear of eternal damnation could hardly be a reason for me to repent anything. If I, as a nonbeliever, felt contrite for having done something wrong, it could only be because it was wrong. If I ceased to fear God's judgment, then the only possible reason I could ever have for doing good would be goodness itself.
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> Much emboldened, I took my reasoning a step further: Maybe atheism was the only way to achieve perfect contrition, the only psychologically possible confronting our misdeeds. Wouldn't a God who loved what was good be more pleased with creatures who sought that good for its own sake than with those who did so only to curry favor? So much more pleased, in fact, that God would rather his creatures displayed perfect contrition than that they believed in him?[108]

This reasoning is suggestive insofar as it tries to point out how religious people's motivations might be misguided. This is a point that is also made a little more stongly by

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[107] Antony, Louise, "The Failure of Moral Arguments" in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J.P. Moreland, Chad Meister and Khaldoun A. Sweis, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 109.

[108] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Professor Donald Hubin, who goes on to state that perfect sacrifice would involve not having accountability in the afterlife (which he calls eschatological moral compensation or EMC), as has been postulated by the accountability aspect of the moral argument. He states the following:

> [E]schatological moral compensation comes with costs. And one is extremely surprising. It is this: If the thesis is correct, then—contrary to what practically all of us believe—there *are no* actions that are both morally laudable and genuinely self-sacrificial…[G]enuine acts of self-sacrifice involve genuine costs to the agent. Where there is no cost, there is no sacrifice, regardless of the motives, beliefs, or intentions of the agent. These other factors bear heavily on questions of the praiseworthiness of the agent and, perhaps, our moral evaluation of the course of conduct the agent undertakes. But without cost, there is no sacrifice and, so, no self-sacrifice.[109]

In other words, this view seems to imply that sacrifice is only sacrifice when there is no reward, because—according to both Antony and Hubin—sacrifice that does not have a cost (but a reward) is no real and genuine sacrifice at all. Actually, Hubin would claim that genuine sacrifice must involve global or net, long-term cost. In this sense, if a person is not deprived from a reward, then there is really no cost involved and, ultimately, no sacrifice. However, is this a valid objection for accountability?

One could present, at least, two counter-objections to both Antony and Hubin. The first argument, the one that could be presented to Antony's case, would be that her observations amount to nothing but her personal perceptions of the psychology of human morality. There are certainly times in which one can know and feel contrition, because what one did was simply wrong thereby also knowing that one has sinned against God. Furthermore, in this case, it is absolutely relevant to point out that Christian theology claims that it is by grace that that human beings are saved. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that, given that Christians act morally, they will be rewarded in heaven; instead, Christian theology teaches that given that Jesus Christ died for people's sins and faults, it is the Christians' duty to act in such a manner as to bring glory to God. In this sense, the fear of punishment is removed, and genuine acts of contrition do, indeed, take place.

In addition to this, it is vitally important to acknowledge and reiterate that, if the Christian picture of the world were not true, and there were no after-life, it seems really hard to see what sort of motivation Ted Bundy would have for not committing certain

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[109] Ibid., pp. 136-138.

atrocities. The difference between living as he did or as Mother Theresa of Calcutta would be trivial and unimportant. It boils down to a matter of preference. Even acknowledging, for the sake of argument, that there are things that are objectively right and objectively wrong on the naturalist worldview (suppose, for example, that the Ten Commandments were written on the sky), if one can get away with a particular deed, then too bad for the moral realm.

The second argument, the one that could be presented to Hubin's case, would be that the kind of reasoning that Hubin employs seems to set the standard far too high for *genuine* self-sacrifice, to an extreme and almost ludicrous extent, even for naturalists themselves. Let us suppose the following case scenario: Two parents work extra hours at their jobs in order to be able to afford their child's tuition at a good university. They go through tough times for quite a few years: sometimes they have to restrict the amount of food they buy and eat; sometimes they just cannot have vacations, because that would be an expense that would be hard to recover from financial-wise; sometimes they deprive themselves of certain luxuries in order to achieve their goal.

Now, of course, under Hubin's principle, none of this would count as *genuine* self-sacrifice if their child graduates from college, i.e., if the "sacrifice" was worth the effort, because of the reward, then it was not a real self-sacrifice. Given that Hubin's principle requires a "net cost to the individual" that is not compensated eventually, then neither this nor other similar examples constitute *genuine* self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, this should strike anyone as counter-intuitive, because it seems obvious to anyone that has gone through these situations that these *are genuine* instances of self-sacrifice. Indeed, if these were not genuine instances of self-sacrifice, probably the only instances that would count as such would be cases in which the person making the self-sacrifice dies, and, therefore, one can be assured that there was a total "net, long-term cost".

However, there are at least three problems with this thesis. First, once one dies, it seems hard to talk about the "net, long-term cost", because usually this refers to the projection that an action will have in the future, and, according to atheistic naturalists (which are the ones that the moral argument is interested to contending with), there is no future once one is dead. Second, this would be question begging by the naturalists, for he would merely be assuming, in this context, that there is no future life after death, because, if there were a future life after death, then even this extreme conception of "net, long-term cost" self-sacrifice would fail completely. Yet, that is the very question under consideration. Third, this analysis would be ultimately *ad hoc*, an argument carefully

designed and concocted to respond to the accountability argument in support of the moral argument, instead of having independent grounds for postulating this sort of conception of self-sacrifice. In other words, this conception of *genuine* self-sacrifice would be useless for all intents and purposes except for trying to raise an objection to the moral argument. In this sense, it worth quoting Craig's own response at length to the sort of argument presented by Hubin:

> It seems to me that such a claim involves an idiosyncratic understanding of what counts as genuine self-sacrifice and therefore becomes almost trivial. Hubin's own illustrations of ways in which we often speak betray how counterintuitive a conception he has of genuine self-sacrifice. I should say that persons who endure the hardships he mentions do make tremendous, genuine self-sacrifices, even if these sacrifices do not involve permanent net losses for the individuals involved, and if Hubin denies that they are genuine, then he is using "genuine" in an idiosyncratic way, so that his claim that theism is incompatible with morally laudable acts of genuine self-sacrifice is evacuated of significance. The strangeness of his conception of genuine self-sacrifice becomes even more evident when we reflect that, given theism, it is people who lead lives of narcissistic self-indulgence who are performing acts of genuine self-sacrifice, since such acts will result in a net loss to those individuals. On any normal understanding of the words, it seems bizarre to say that such selfish persons are leading genuinely self-sacrificing lives. Yet that is the implication of the meaning Hubin attributes to "genuine self-sacrifice." Far from being a problem for theism, it is part of the glory of theism that there cannot be morally laudable acts of self-sacrifice that go ultimately uncompensated. "For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed" (Heb. 6:10).[110]

Therefore, after having analyzed this objection, it seems to be lacking in persuasiveness and cogency. If naturalists want to make an objection to the sort of accountability argument that has been presented here, probably they have to think of a different way of doing that. On this issue, it seems that what the Apostle Paul said stands:

> For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be no raised, your faith is vain…If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable…what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die (King James Version, 1 Corinthians 15: 16-19 and 32).

[110] Ibid., p. 175.

3.3 Euthyphro's Dilemma

Ever since Plato—through Socrates's mouth—raised the problem, Euthyphro's problem has been a constant resource towards which naturalists turn in order to attempt to refute the moral argument for God's existence. David Brink puts the dilemma in the following terms:

> We might formulate this metaphysical claim as the doctrine that things are morally good or right just in case God approves of them. In assessing this claim, we would do well to consider Socrates' discussion of a related issue. In Plato's *Euthyphro* Socrates considers Euthyphro's definition of piety as what (all) the gods love (10a–11b).6 He does not dispute the truth of this claim; instead, he distinguishes two different ways it might be true.
>
> (a) Something is pious, because the gods love it.
>
> (b) Something is loved by the gods, because it is pious.
>
> Socrates does not label these two claims. We might call the first claim voluntarism, because it makes something's piety depend on God's will. We might call the second claim naturalism, because it makes something's piety depend on its nature.[111]

Louise Antony translates the ancient argument in this way:

> Translated into contemporary terms, the question Socrates is asking is this: Are morally good actions morally good simply in virtue of God's favoring them? Or does God favor them because they are—independently of his favoring them—morally good? ...The moral theory that embodies the first reading of the updated Euthyphro definition is called divine command theory (DCT)...Theories that endorse the second option—let's call any such theory a divine independence theory (DIT).[112]

In other words, the question may be construed in the following terms: If one needs God to ground morality, then the question is whether something is good because God wills it to be good, or whether something is good because God simply *recognizes* it to be good. Is something good because God wills it, or does God will something because it is good? This can be clearly seen as suggesting an important problem for Christian theism.

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[111] BRINK, DAVID O., "The Autonomy of Ethics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 151.
[112] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 71.

On the one hand, if something is good simply because God wills it, then things that are currently deemed to be bad could be good had God wanted them to be good.[113] For example, even though currently child abuse and rape are evil, if God had wanted it to be a good thing, then that would have made it *ipso facto* a good thing. Naturally, this case scenario is completely counterintuitive and goes against our most fundamental moral tendencies and intuitions, for this would make God's (arbitrary) fiat to be the foundation of morality as such, without any further explanation of the choice. And, therefore, if naturalists could prove that this rough position is the case, it would probably constitute a defeater—or, at the very least, a strong undercutter—of the claim that God is the ontological foundation of morality, at least in the way this has been proposed so far.

On the other hand, if God wills something because it is good, then the good would have a standard that is superior to God himself, which God simply recognizes to be true. Evidently, this would constitute a challenge to both the moral argument for God's existence and to the divine attribute of aseity. First, it would constitute a challenge to the moral argument that has been defended in this work, due to the fact that, if God himself is in need of recognition of a higher standard outside of himself, then the moral argument fails, because, ultimately, morality is quite independent from God. If this is so, then there is, naturally, no need to postulate God as the ontological foundation of morality. Second, this would constitute a challenge to Christian theism itself and the doctrine of divine aseity[114], because God would not be the ultimate Being and the Creator of everything else; He would not be the only *Esse Ipsum Subsistens* or the only uncreated Being, but there would be something beyond himself that is self-subsistent, which is, of course, contradictory.

Ultimately, this challenge must be answered properly if the moral argument is to stand. As Baggett and Walls say:

> What is clear…are these two points: (I) If the moral argument for God's existence is to hold water, the Euthyphro Dilemma and the handful of objections it raises against theistic ethics must be answered, either by abandoning voluntarism altogether or by offering a

[113] This is what has been traditionally called voluntarism, whose most distinctive proponent in the Middle Ages was William of Ockham.

[114] Aseity comes from the Latin words "*a*" (by) and "*se*" (itself). This term refers to the Christian doctrine that asserts that God is self-existent and independent, i.e., God is not limited and does not depend on any feature of the world for His existence or power.

> more defensible version of divine command theory; because (2) certain variants of divine command theory, such as the Ockhamistic version as [Louise] Antony depicts it, need to be rejected. The problems confronting those versions seem insuperable. What is less clear, though, is whether or not the version of voluntarism that Antony gives is the only or even best version of voluntarism and whether other, non-Ockhamistic formulations may be out there that are capable of avoiding the challenges we've seen Euthyphro inspire.[115]

It is interesting to note that, in terms of analytical philosophy of religion, there has been a resurgence in attempting to defend what has been called Divine Command Theory, which is, in effect, a form of voluntarism with a lot more nuances than the ones given by Ockham. Furthermore, it is important to realize that some of these sophisticated attempts have avoided many of the problems that the traditional voluntarist solutions propose.[116] While these attempts are very interesting and worth considering at length, the answer that will be provided in this section will not interact directly with such hypotheses, though indirectly coinciding on certain issues. The reason why this is the case is because, as it was stated above, the argument provided in this work is attempting to provide a defense of two out of the three elements that Dr. Craig defended; that is, while it has been attempted to defend moral values and moral accountability, in the context of a meaningful and worthy human life considered as a whole, Euthyphro's Dilemma concerns mainly moral duties.

In other words, it is important to point out that what will be analyzed is not the deontic aspect of morality. Rather, this work is primarily focused on attending to the axiological aspects of morality. So, while Euthyphro's Dilemma also has a detailed and important solution in deontic terms, the formal object of the following analysis will be purposefully framed in terms of the axiological implications of this dilemma, not its deontic consequences. In this sense, it is vital to recognize that this work has focused primarily on understanding the ontological relationship between the *good* and God, more so than it has focused on understanding the ontological relationship between the *right* and God. While these issues are intricately related, it is conceptually possible to distinguish between them. And, therefore, this is what will be done in what follows.

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[115] BAGGETT, DAVID., AND WALLS, JERRY., op. cit., p. 37.

[116] Cf. Murphy, Mark, "Theological Voluntarism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/voluntarism-theological/>. See also: BAGGETT, DAVID, AND WALLS, JERRY., *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 103-142.

Now, in order to understand the possible solution to Euthyphro's Dilemma, it is commonly recognized that, while there are true dilemmas, there are also false dilemmas insofar as they do not explore all of the alternatives. This seems to be part of this dilemma, i.e., while the alternatives seem to be exhaustive, there is another possibility on how to answer such a question. In this sense, while Euthyphro's Dilemma is not entirely misguided, there are certain nuances that can be made to understand the possibilities in much less simplistic terms. In order to understand some of these nuances, some classical metaphysical distinctions need to be established, particularly the Medieval doctrine of the transcendentals, particularly as Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition have understood it.

The doctrine of the transcendentals of being, with regards to the good, establishes that being and good are convertible between them (*ens et bonum convertuntur*). This means that, even though *conceptually* good and being are different, as a matter of *reality*, whatever is is good and vice versa. In other words, to use Fregean terminology, one could say that, while the *senses* of good and being are different, the *reference* is the same. Now, this is extremely important, particularly because, as it was stated above, God has been traditionally considered to be Subsistent Being Itself (*Ipsum Esse Subsistence*). So, if God is Being itself, then God is the Good itself, in virtue of the doctrine of the convertibility of the transcendental properties of being. Furthermore, good can be understood in terms of being itself insofar as it is desirable. Here it important to distinguish between good itself and moral good. While all moral good is good, not all good is moral good. Professor Brian Davies establishes this very clearly:

> One might make the point by saying that 'good', unlike 'green', is not an adjective which signifies a single property had by everything which can be described by means of it. You can understand 'X is green' without knowing what X is (to say that grass is green and that my carpet is green is to ascribe exactly the same property to each of them). But you cannot in the same way understand 'X is good' if you do not know what X is. X might be a singer. X might also be a surgeon. Do all good singers possess a property had by all good surgeons, this being what makes them all good? If they did, then from 'Fred is a good singer' we could infer that, if he is also a surgeon, he is a good surgeon, which we obviously cannot. Fred might be an excellent singer but an awful surgeon. 'Good' resembles adjectives such as 'big' and 'small'. 'X is a big elephant' does not mean (a) 'X is big' and (b) 'X is an elephant' (these being understandable apart from each other). And

> 'X is a small cat' does not mean (a) 'X is small' and (b) 'X is a cat' (these also being understandable apart from each other). To suppose otherwise, and on the assumption that elephants and cats are both animals, would license us to conclude that a big cat is a big animal and that a small elephant is a small animal, which we obviously should not.[117]

In this sense, one should be careful not to confuse God's being good with God's being morally good, in the sense that human beings are morally good, in virtue of being moral agents. God is not a moral agent in the way in which human beings are moral agents. God is Good Itself in His very nature. Now, of course, as Baggett and Walls point out that the fact that God is not a moral agent does not make Him evil:

> To be clear, Davies is not saying that God is evil, but that the characterization of him as morally good is somehow inappropriate, smacking of anthropomorphism. For, again, God does not need to consult an independent moral set of guidelines. In addition, Davies argues, the goodness of God, in the history of philosophy and theology until rather recently, has usually been less a matter of moral goodness than (I) a matter of ontological completeness and (2) God as the proper object of human desires.[118]

Certainly, this is not to say that God is less than moral but more than moral: God is Goodness itself. Therefore, one should not understand God in anthropomorphic terms. As Baggett and Walls say, "When it comes to the ultimate Good, we are inclined to say more than that it depends on God. In some important sense we wish to argue that God *just is* the ultimate Good."[119] So, Euthyphro's Dilemma asks whether something is good because God capriciously wills it, or if he wills something, because of a goodness independent of Him. Baggett and Walls think that the answer is neither one of those options: "Since it is God's very nature and no arbitrary decision of his that thus constitutes the standard of morality, only things consonant with God's nature could be morally good." Or, as Professor Craig would say:

> On the theistic view, God's moral nature is expressed towards us...Far from being arbitrary, these commands flow...from his moral nature. On this foundation we can affirm the objective goodness and rightness of love, generosity, self-sacrifice, and equality, and

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[117] Davies, Brian, *Aquinas*, New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 143.
[118] BAGGETT, DAVID., AND WALLS, JERRY., op. cit., p. 55.
[119] Ibid., p. 92.

> condemn as objectively evil and wrong selfishness, hatred, abuse, discrimination, and oppression.[120]

In this sense, it could be stated that Euthyphro's Dilemma poses a problem that can certainly be resolved, paradoxically and ironically enough, in terms of an answer that resembles Plato's metaphysic to some extent, namely, that God must be identified with the Good.[121] On this issue, Christians have a long history behind them supporting them. As Baggett and Walls conclude:

> We are inclined to think that the ultimate ontological inseparableness of God and the Good is something of an axiomatic Anselmian intuition...That so many solid theists through the centuries have gravitated toward such a view bolsters this impression. If God is the ultimate Good, such that necessary moral truths are reflective of an aspect of God, then indeed Plantinga is right that to apprehend such truths is to catch a glimpse of God himself. Moreover, if such dependence or even identity obtains or is even possible, then the Euthyphro Dilemma is effectively defused and the moral argument for God's existence accordingly gains strength.[122]

3.5 Classical Ethics, Teleology and Well-Being

Probably, one of the hardest objections that has been encountered by theists who aim to defend some sort of moral argument for God's existence has been the challenge to defend the autonomy and self-sufficient autonomy of ethics from a classical perspective. This is especially important when talking about moral value. This related-to-moral-value approach has been taken by important moral philosophers like Mark Murphy and Philippa Foot in order to deny God as a necessary condition for morality. Thus, in the context of the necessity of founding morality on God's being, both philosopher Mark Murphy and philosopher Philippa Foot seem to believe it is not necessary to ground morality in God in order to be able to account for it. For this reason, it might be deemed important to make some comments replying to their points of view on this issue.

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[120] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[121] Even though it is important to point out that historically Plato did not *stricto sensu* identify any sort of god with the Idea of the Good. It was a Christian contribution to identify God with their first principle. Cf. Gilson, E., *God and Philosophy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

[122] BAGGETT, DAVID., AND WALLS, JERRY., op. cit., p. 93.

In this sense, following Craig's analysis, Murphy suggests that there are four important elements to take into account when considering human value: 1) universality, 2) objectivity, 3) normativity, and 4) other-directedness. First, universality is a fundamental part of any moral analysis, i.e., all human beings are governed by what is morally valuable. Second, moral values must be objective, i.e., moral values true or false independently of whether one agrees with them or not. Third, morality is normative. As Murphy puts it:

> When a state of affairs is morally valuable, then an agent has reason to care about it, or pursue it; when an act is morally obligatory, then an agent has reason (perhaps decisive reason) to perform it; when a person is morally responsible for something, then he or she has reason to protect of promote it. [123]

Fouth, morality is other-directed insofar as it relates to the actions of other human beings. As Murphy states:

> At least some of the states of affairs that are morally valuable or actions that are morally obligatory bear directly on other people and their well-being, and we are morally responsible for not caring adequately for or not fully complying with our obligation toward the others. When we say, then, that the relief of suffering is morally valuable, we are saying that for all human beings, the relief of suffering is something that there is reason to care about and to work toward. When we say that it is morally obligatory to refrain from killing the innocent, we are saying that all human beings have strong, even decisive, reason to refrain from killing the innocent.[124]

After having outlined more extensively what Murphy believes Craig's account of morality entails, he takes it for granted and proceeds to criticize Craig's approach on these four levels, showing that an ontological naturalist fares no worse than the theist in terms of the justification of morality. Therefore, what Murphy does is to sketch, in general terms, a nontheistic account of moral value, an account which can be appropriated by both theists and atheists. In this sense, Murphy—while being a theist himself—thinks that his nontheistic account of morality, in terms of prudential value, can be the ontological ground for the moral realm. He takes a two-step approach. First, he shows that there can be prudential value without God. Second, he tries to show that there is a connection

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[123] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 120.
[124] Ibid., pp. 120-121

between prudential value and moral value. If he succeeds with this argument, this would most likely provide a strong defeater, or at least a strong undercutter, for the claim that God is the ontological foundation for morality.

According to Murphy, the category that can accomplish the work of grounding theistically moral value is the notion of *prudential* value. As he sees it, it is rather uncontroversial to claim that prudential value can exist independently of whether God exists or not. Then, he suggests that prudential value is enough to account for the kind of ontological moral ground that theists require of the naturalists. In this sense, Murphy states what his understanding of prudential value is and how it can account for the four characteristics of morality stated above. In other words, ultimately, what Murphy seeks to do is to equate moral value with prudential value; or, to the very least, he suggests that moral value is just a subset of prudential value. Given that this is what could be considered to be the gist of his argumentation, it is worth quoting him at length:

> To be prudentially valuable is to be *good for* a subject. To be prudentially valuable is to be what makes a subject well-off, what makes his or her life go well, what constitutes his or her well-being, what contributes to his or her flourishing. Prudential value can be as *objective* as can be: Whether one is well-off is not determined by the subject's own judgments of well-being—I can be very well-off and not realize it, and I can be very badly off and not realize it. (Indeed, one sign of the of the objectivity of prudential value is the fact that we argue about what really makes for well-being.) Prudential value is universal: It is plausible that we can give a general account of what makes all humans well-off, whether it is done in terms of desire-satisfaction, or pleasure, or some list of goods such as health, knowledge, friendship, aesthetic experience, and so forth. Prudential value is normative: Surely we have reason to care about our own well-being.[125]

Now, at this point, Murphy suggests that prudential value is similar to moral value in its objectivity, universality, and normativity. Actually, he says, "For God to love us is for God to value us and want *our good*. For God to be kind to us is for God to act in ways that serve *our well-being*."[126] In this sense, what makes a given state of affairs valuable or non-valuable for a person is whether the person is better off with that state of affairs or not. For example, being relieved from excruciating pain makes someone better-off.

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[125] Ibid., pp. 122-123
[126] Ibid., p. 124

Likewise, poverty is a bad state of affairs because it makes people worse-off. In this way, Murphy tries to equate moral good with prudential good.

Even though this is the case, Murphy suggest, the theist might not believe this to be the case for the other-directedness part of the equation, the fourth characteristic. While the moral good is good *simpliciter*, the prudential good is only good *for a subject*. In other words, even though prudential value is good for a subject, what reasons could be given to commend to others to look after the good of that very subject, if it does not benefit anyone other than the subject in question? To this question, Murphy replies by saying that human beings are a special and distinct sort of organism, because they possess "*reflective* and *objectivizing* intelligence, which enables them to call their inclinations into question and to see themselves as one person among others."[127]

To this particular account of moral value, Philippa Foot adds some very substantial and insightful account of morality in her short but influential book *Natural Goodness*. Anyone who reads her book can see how brilliant and honest Philippa Foot is when trying to account for morality in naturalistic terms. In her book, she argues for moral objectivity and against moral cognitivism in terms of neo-Aristotelian categories. Like Murphy, she argues that perhaps the difference between moral good and other sorts of goods (like prudential good) is almost trivial.[128] In her view, what a given form of life should do depends on what kind of form of life it is. Similarly, what human beings should do depends, ultimately, on the kind of beings they are, on their nature. Furthermore, all living beings have certain intrinsic tendencies in terms of their operations and characteristics. These tendencies constitute a teleology proper to all forms of life, which have normative value. As she states:

> 'Natural' goodness, as I define it, which is attributable only to living things themselves and to their parts, characteristics, and operations, is intrinsic or 'autonomous' goodness in that it depends directly on the relation of an individual 'life form' of its species…My belief is that for all the differences that there are, as we shall see, between the evaluation of plants and animals and their parts and characteristics on the one hand, and the moral evaluation of humans on the other, we shall find that these evaluations share a basic

[127] Ibid., p. 125

[128] What is odd in her account is that she argues for univocal language instead of analogical language, which would be a more traditional approach and comprehensive.

logical structure and status. I want to suggest that moral defect is a form of natural defect not as different as is generally supposed from defect in sub-rational living things.[129]

In addition to this, Foot argues that the normative validity of the teleological descriptions depends on the nature of the species to which the individual belongs. This is what Michael Thompson calls *Aristotelian categoricals*, and what Philipa Foot, following Thompson, calls "natural-history propositions"[130], which "speak of the life cycle of individuals of a given species"[131]. In this sense, descriptions of individuals depend on the species to which they belong, which is in turn related to its normative value. As Baggett and Walls state:

> The relevant categoricals, says Foot, play a part in the life of the species; what "plays a part" in this way is that which is causally and teleologically related to it, as putting out roots is related to obtaining nourishment, and attracting insects is related to reproduction in plants. Some but not all general propositions about a species have to do with the teleology of living things of this kind. Those propositions teleologically significant in the requisite sense are connected to *purposive language*. What is crucial to all teleological propositions is the expectation of an answer to the question, "What part does it play in the life cycle of the species?" In other words, what is its function? Or what good does it do? We could say that part of what distinguishes an Aristotelian categorical from a mere statistical proposition about some or most or all the members of a kind of living thing is the fact that it relates to the teleology of the species. This is why Aristotelian categoricals are able to describe *norms* rather than *statistical normalities*.[132]

Moreover, it is quite possible to give a general account of the needs of human beings and what constitutes the flourishing of human beings. In this sense, "it is possible that the concept of a good human life plays the same part in determining the goodness of human characteristics and operations that the concept of flourishing plays in the determination of goodness in plants and animals."[133] Furthermore, she argues that when one talks about happiness (which is what all human beings want), it is best understood in terms of human flourishing. And human flourishing can only be attained when the natural

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[129] Foot, P., *Natural Goodness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 27
[130] Ibid., p. 29
[131] Ibid.
[132] Baggett, David., and Walls, Jerry., *God and Cosmos, Moral Truth and Human Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p.127
[133] Ibid., p. 128

tendencies fulfill their proper end, i.e., when a given being instantiates the life form of his species.

After having understood, in very general terms, the challenge that Mark Murphy and Philippa Foot pose for the theistic foundation of morality that has been proposed in this work, several comments are in order. While both exponents are brilliant and systematic in their exposition, one could still find at least four main objections that raise various important issues and problems for their views: 1) Are humans of intrinsic value? Is human flourishing of intrinsic value? 2) Does nature ever act in vain? 3) Human nature is the proximate ground for morality, but God is the ultimate ground for morality. 4) Human flourishment is better understood in theistic terms. Consequently, in what follows, all four of these points will be explained and expounded upon.

First of all, it might be important to point out that there does not seem to be, in principle, any reason for a theist not to adopt either Murphy's or Foot's account of morality in terms of normative ethics. Actually, it would be sensible for one to adopt something along the lines of their points of view (again, in terms of normative ethics). However, as far as the onto-anthropological challenge to naturalism is concerned, their accounts of morality—if taken as a metaethical justification of the ontological ground of values—seems to be lacking an answer for the most fundamental question in this dialogue, namely, are human beings intrinsically valuable? Human flourishing as the end of human beings only seems to make sense under the premise that human beings are valuable in themselves. Of course, there is no question that both Murphy and Foot assume that human beings do have value. Nevertheless, the more fundamental question is whether they would be justified in taking that stance if naturalism were true.

This is a very important issue to raise here, especially because, as Foot points out, natural good can be predicated of both human animals and non-human animals. Thus, for example, if one thinks of bacteria or cancer cells, which similarly feature a certain kind of normativity, in virtue of their being alive and having a "natural history" or "Aristotelian categorical" that they belong to, how can one choose between cancer cells and the human being that those cancer cells are affecting negatively without begging the question in favor of human beings? Why should one favor human beings over cancer cells without appealing to some sort of unjustified speciesism? In this sense, the argumentation given by both Murphy and Foot seem to presuppose all along (quite rightly) the intrinsic value

of human beings. Unfortunately, without a theistic framework, there seems not to be any warrant of justification for their ethics. It is interesting to see what Baggett and Walls say about Foot's view in particular:

> Perhaps the most significant [reservation towards Philippa Foot's work] is that her account seems to leave unanswered a most fundamental question germane to this chapter: Is human flourishing of intrinsic value? We have no doubt but that it is, and that Foot recognized it to be so. She was within her epistemic rights to affirm it, as we think this is a moral truth to which atheists and naturalists are entirely privy, the world structured as it is, human beings made as they are. But questions of justification aside, can Foot's account explain the foundation for such a truth? We do not think so…[H]ow do we effect Foot's slide from natural normativity to objective morality in the case of human beings? For she is admitting in the case of animals and pestilential creatures that her analysis is neither based on the assumption of, nor logically implies, any intrinsic moral value in their surviving and thriving. Why then is it different for human beings?[134]

This same issue seems to be quite applicable to Mark Murphy. Even though he does try to suggest a foundation for human being's intrinsic worth and dignity in that human beings are endowed with a "*reflective* and *objectivizing* intelligence, which enables them to call their inclinations into question and to see themselves as one person among others,"[135] this does not seem to fare very well in the overall ontological panorama. Again, while the reflective and objectivizing intelligence does seem to constitute a necessary condition for morality, insofar as those are properties that flow out of rationality and free will, that does not seem to overcome the challenge of the nothingness and meaninglessness of the universe as a whole. When all things are considered, there does not seem to be good reasons, apart from the power to do so, to choose beings that are reflective and with an objectivizing intelligence to non-reflective beings and with no objetivizing intelligence. As William Lane Craig says:

> There seems to be an enormous gap in Murphy's argument at this point. How does it follow from *Homo sapiens'* reflective and objectivizing intelligence that what is conducive to human flourishing is morally good? (...) But I do not see the connection between humans' being endowed with reflective and objetivizing intelligence and

[134] Ibid., pp. 129-130
[135] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 125.

prudential value's being other-directed. As a result of seeing myself as one among many, I may realize that I had better look out for my own interests if I am to get ahead.[136]

As Craig states, one could probably look after the well-being of other people just because, ultimately, there will be some benefit for one's own well-being. The question becomes how to transcend some form of sheer egoism and pure self-interest, without assuming the moral worth of the human person. And, if it is, indeed, assumed, is it justifiable under the Russellian world picture of naturalism? Interestingly enough, under this view, rape and other moral atrocities seem not be *really* wrong, but just an inconvenience to a particular being. Furthermore, how can one go from the proposition "X is good for me" to the proposition "X is good *simpliciter*". Indeed, on the positive side, there seems to be more to morality than merely prudential reasons, because the ultimate good, to which most people are constantly trying to reach out to, seems to be good in and of itself. Under this view, there nothing to be desired for its own sake.

A second objection that could be raised towards this view is related to a certain premise that might be hidden, especially in Foot's work, namely, that nature never does anything in vain. In this sense, it can be useful to begin with Aristotle's analysis of teleology in nature:

> Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim…If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be *empty and vain*), clearly this must be the good and the chief good.[137]

Professor Zagal notes that this whole reasoning can be divided into three main arguments[138]. The first argument has three main premises: 1) There is an end to human beings' acts which is wanted for its own sake. 2) It is true that one does not always choose one thing for the sake of another. 3) That ultimate end would be the chief good. The

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[136] Garcia, R.K. and King, N. L., Ed., *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[137] Aristotle, *N.E.*, I, 1, 1094a 1-3 and 19-23. (Emphasis mine).

[138] Cf. Zagal-Arreguin, Héctor, ""Orexis", "Telos" y "Physis" Un comentario con ocasión de EN 1094a l9ss", *ACTA PHILOSOPHICA*, vol. 4 (1995), fasc. 2, pp. 137-147.

second argument states simply the following: "If there is not an end desired for its own sake, then our desires would go on *ad infinitum*". Then, the third argument simply states: "If our desire goes on *ad infinitum*, then our desire would be empty and vain". The implied conclusion would be that—since nobody would accept that all of our desires are empty and vain, and applying *modus tollens* to the argument as a whole—there is a chief good towards which the rest of the human potencies are ordered. This whole reasoning seems to rely heavily upon the assumption that no one would be willing to admit that the proposition "nature and our desires are empty and vain" could be reasonably believed to be true. What does it mean to state that "nature does not do anything in vain"? Professor Zagal explains it thus:

> **That "nature does not do anything in vain" means that the natural structure is a rational structure. The adjective "rational" should be understood in teleological terms: a set of objects or an object isolated is ordered if and only if it has a really existent end. Between objects and ends there is a relationship of real correspondence. To each really existent object (and therefore informed by a final cause) corresponds a really existent end.**[139]

But is it true that no one would be willing to accept the proposition that "nature does not do anything in vain" and that "our natural desires are empty and vain"? On the one hand, it interesting that Sartre and much of the atheistic existentialism of the 20th century stressed this very idea. Sartre famously stated that "man is a useless passion". Therefore, if the universe is simply here, with no purpose or conscious creator, what reason is there to believe that there is order in the world. Even if it could be argued that there is, indeed, a natural order in the universe, given that mankind is the kind of organism that needs to choose whether to fulfill his end or not (because human beings are by nature free and rational), what good reason would there be for actualizing the potentialities intrinsic to human nature if it does not happen to benefit the recipient of the action at all? Why should one accept the moral point of view at all? On the other hand, given God's existence, it might be possible to claim such a thing. For example, Thomas Aquinas elaborated similar arguments to Aristotle. Nevertheless, his premise was built upon the existence of a divinely ordered world. As Professor Zagal states:

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[139] Zagal-Arreguin, Héctor, "'Orexis", "Telos" y "Physis" Un comentario con ocasión de EN 1094a l9ss", *ACTA PHILOSOPHICA*, vol. 4 (1995), fasc. 2, p. 140. (My translation).

> If we introduce the creation variable in the anthropology, the panorama changes. The human being is just like God wants him. God created him with a determinate structure because the human person would thereby reach its end. Affronting the human condition hinders the person from the fullness of his vocation…If we attend to the definition of natural law in the *Corpus Thomisticum*, it is very clear that its radical strength comes from the Lawgiver. The natural order [compels] us because it was created by God. It can inspire very little moral respect a "natural order" which is the fruit of chance, especially when our technical capacities can modify it. In this sense, it is urgent to recover the creatural dimension of human beings and not dispense with the creational aspect when building our anthropology…In no way do I consider that the Aristotelian ethics should be discarded. Simply, it is insufficient, in a special manner now that the technical development opens so many possibilities.[140]

As it has been pointed out above and as Zagal has reiterated repeatedly, the Aristotelian teleology of the universe is not enough to escape the "naturalistic fallacy", if the universe is taken to be mere arbitrary *factum*. The facticity of a *merely* Aristotelian (and, *a fortiori*, much less a contemporary naturalistic) universe does not seem strong enough to warrant important nomothetic conclusions.[141] Without the concept of a created nature, ethics seems to be only partially defensible. As Zagal says, "It is not irrelevant for ethics to talk about the origin of nature: it is not the same thing to have a created nature than to have a nature whose disposition is partially arbitrary ("the parts are that way, because they are that way)".[142] In this sense, nature as a mere *factum* does not have the same force as a nature which is rationally intelligible and ordered from its origin. This, as a whole, seems to reiterate what has been previously stated, namely, that without a robust enough anthropology, ethics seems to fall into futility.

The third analysis that could be levelled at Murphy and Foot can be better understood in terms of a clarification and a quick observation more than an objection. One could agree wholeheartedly with Foot and Murphy in that human nature is,

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[140] Zagal-Arreguin, Héctor, "Naturaleza y creación: la falacia naturalista y ética aristotélica", in *Libro Anual del Instituto Superior de Estudios Eclesiásticos, Arquidiócesis de México*, México D.F., Vol. 2, No. 5, agosto de 2003, p. 15.

[141] Again, as far as normative ethics is concerned, the Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian approaches are, in my opinion, very powerful given certain assumptions that a theistic framework seems justify better. For this reason, I believe that the Thomistic approach is better equipped to deal with this issue at all levels. At any rate, as it has been pointed out repeatedly throughout this work, the thesis concerns moral ontology and, therefore, metaethics, not normative ethics. Therefore, it could perhaps be argued that, while the naturalistic fallacy can have weight at the level of moral ontology, it does not seem to have nearly the same weight it terms of normative ethics.

[142] Zagal-Arreguin, Héctor, ""Orexis", "Telos" y "Physis" Un comentario con ocasión de EN 1094a l9ss", *ACTA PHILOSOPHICA*, vol. 4 (1995), fasc. 2, p. 144. (My translation).

undoubtedly the proximate ground for morality insofar as moral evaluations flow out of human nature. However, as it has been stated throughout this work, that sort of analysis presupposes the dignity of human beings above other kinds of beings in nature. And that is precisely the reason why morality, insofar as it relies upon the assumption that human beings are valuable, must postulate the existence of a Being who has lovingly created human beings with certain structures and natures. Again, even if one could understand the normative character of the teleological structures in nature, the question of the reason for taking the moral point of view remains. In a universe in which nothing really has ultimately value, why is human being more valuable than a dog or a bug, which also have teleological structures of their own? Even if morality were related to prudential value and the wellbeing of human beings, why care at all for other people rather than oneself, especially (which shifts the issue to the second part of the ontological moral argument) if there is no ultimate accountability at the end of this life.

The fourth aspect that should be observed relates to the flourishing of human beings. Even granting for the sake of argument that morality can be explained in terms of human flourishing, one must ask whether human beings can flourish and achieve their perfection in a universe where there is no ultimate good. If the Christian conception of the world is true, then that means that the only way to live a fulfilling life would be to order one's life to the real ultimate end, namely, God himself as the Good. As John Paul II states, "Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are in conformity with man's true good and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person towards his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness." Furthermore, the love ethic of Christianity, which has permeated Western culture so far, would be lacking. In general terms, even if one could grant, for the sake of argument, that morality can be ontologically justified apart from God, one should still see that to add God into the morality equation would be far from irrelevant. As American philosopher Edward Feser says:

> If God exists, then he cannot fail to be the ultimate end, in which case everything else in our moral lives would necessarily have to be subordinated to our religious obligations; and even the most conservative form of secular life cannot fail to be altered radically

when redirected towards a religious end. Hence if God exists an adequate account of the content of morality will necessarily have to reflect this fact.[143]

[143] Feser, E., *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2009, p. 190.

Conclusion

Final Remarks

Now that the objections to the sort of reformulation of the moral argument that has been presented in this work have been answered, it might be important to sum up what has been stated throughout this work. It should be remembered what was done in each of the three main sections. In the first section, some important semantic distinctions and definitions were presented. Thus, it was presented the difference between metaethics, on the one hand, and normative and applied ethics, on the other hand. Later, some definitions were presented in terms of what constitutes ontological naturalism, moral realism, and abduction. In this sense, it was stated that the work's main thesis attempted to present an abductive formulation of the moral argument for God's existence. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the purpose of this work was to show, in abductive terms, how classical theism in the tradition of Christianity works as a better framework or worldview than naturalism upon which to justify an answer for the questions "why should I be moral?" (why one should adopt the moral point of view). Finally, it was pointed out how all of the preceding terms and concepts relate ultimately to the axiological nature of anthropology and its retro-justification, in terms of the metaphysical framework that one adopts. As Rodriguez Luño masterfully explains:

> Metaphysics and Anthropology cannot stop shedding light upon the practical or ethical conception of the human good. Whatever Metaphysics and Anthropology affirm or deny about God's existence, the creation of the world and of man, the provident presence of God in the world, nature, dignity, and destiny of the personal being, etc. lightens the most profound dimensions of the human life and, therefore, of the good life that man wishes to live. Furthermore, speculative philosophy provides the rational elements that will be employed for the philosophical interpretation of moral experience.[144]

In the second section, a sketch of the modern and contemporary history of moral skepticism was presented along with the main moral arguments for God's existence that this work tried to defend. Consequently, the main moral views of Hume, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Mackie were presented both in terms of primary source information and in terms of secondary sources and their interpretations in history. Here, it was suggested that some naturalists (some of them *ante litteram*) have recognized that, without God, something like the Russellian world picture seems to be the case. Later, the moral argument both in its onto-anthropological form and in its epistemic form was presented.

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[144] Rodriguez-Luño, Á, *Ética general*, Pamplona: EUNSA, 2010, p. 41. (My translation)

The onto-anthropological argument showed, roughly, that naturalism entails something like the Russellian picture of the world. Furthermore, if that is the case, then it was suggested that it is quite difficult to justify any real value or intrinsic worth to the human person as such beyond a merely subjective justification, which ends up entailing some form of speciesism. The epistemic argument intended to show the epistemic difficulties that arise when human beings' cognitive equipment is *nothing but* the result of the evolutionary process. Both arguments, at the same time, turn out to relate to the original purpose of this work, namely, to show that, if naturalism is true, that implies some sort of moral and ontological nihilism. In this sense, the poet Steve Turner, in his poem *Creed* shows very vividly what nihilism in contemporary society looks like, given what has been defended in this work:

> We believe everything is OK
> as long as you don't hurt anyone
> to the best of your definition of hurt,
> and to the best of your knowledge.
>
> We believe in sex before, during, and
> after marriage.
> We believe in the therapy of sin.
> We believe that adultery is fun.
> We believe that sodomy's OK.
> We believe that taboos are taboo.
>
> We believe that everything's getting better
> despite evidence to the contrary.
> The evidence must be investigated
> and you can prove anything with evidence.
>
> We believe there's something in horoscopes
> UFO's and bent spoons.
> Jesus was a good man just like Buddha,
> Mohammed, and ourselves.
> He was a good moral teacher though we think
> His good morals were bad.
>
> We believe that all religions are basically the same
> at least the one that we read was.
> They all believe in love and goodness.
> They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.
>
> We believe that after death comes the Nothing
> Because when you ask the dead what happens they say nothing.
> If death is not the end, if the dead have lied, then its compulsory heaven for all
> excepting perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Kahn
> We believe in Masters and Johnson
> What's selected is average.
> What's average is normal.
> What's normal is good.

We believe in total disarmament.
We believe there are direct links between warfare and bloodshed.
Americans should beat their guns into tractors.
And the Russians would be sure to follow.

We believe that man is essentially good.
It's only his behavior that lets him down.
This is the fault of society.
Society is the fault of conditions.
Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the truth that
is right for him. Reality will adapt accordingly.
The universe will readjust. History will alter.
We believe that there is no absolute truth excepting the truth
that there is no absolute truth.

We believe in the rejection of creeds,
and the flowering of individual thought.
If chance be the Father of all flesh,
disaster is his rainbow in the sky
and when you hear
State of Emergency!
Sniper Kills Ten!
Troops on Rampage!
Whites go Looting!
Bomb Blasts School!
It is but the sound of man worshipping his maker.[145]

Finally, it was argued that classical theism, particularly in the tradition of Judeo-Christian theism, can provide a better, more plausible foundation or grounding for objective morality and objective human dignity, as understood in the traditional sense of dignity. If Christianity is true, then God is the real and ultimate Good towards which human beings are ordered and directed by nature. In this sense, God is the ultimate cause of morality and human dignity. If it is true, human beings are created in God's image; human beings are made by Love himself; human beings were created to love God and his neighbors; human beings were created free and rational with certain human potentialities and faculties which have a real end proper to their own created natures. In this other sense, human beings' nature constitutes the proximate ground of morality. Nevertheless, ultimately, this framework is what best explains human experience.

[145] **Retrived from:** https://americandigest.org/creed-by-steve-turner/

In the third and final section, some objections were presented to the view sketched above. Then, these objections were answered. First, the objection that confused moral epistemology with moral ontology was answered by clarifying the distinction established in the first part. Second, the necessary-truths challenge raised by Richard Swinburne was answered in terms of both Craig and Plantinga's arguments to the objection. Third, the atheism as perfect piety objection to moral accountability was raised. This was challenge was also answered by noting that the criteria that was being used to judge the motivation for acting morally of Christians (and other classical theists) were far too out of touch with reality and people's understanding of sacrifice. Fourth, the famous and classical Euthyphro's dilemma was raised. This was shown not to apply to the God of classical theism insofar as He is himself the Good. Finally, a long discussion of Philippa Foot and Mark Murphy' works and contributions to ethics in nontheistic terms was analyzed. It was noted that, while their approaches in terms of normative ethics are magnificent, they are lacking a creational component in order to have a basis for affirming both the rationality of paying attention to the teleological aspects of human nature and, more importantly, the ultimate and non-relative dignity of human beings *qua* human beings.

If the arguments presented in this work prove to be correct, then the thesis will constitute, at least, a strong moral motivation for not adopting naturalism as a worldview—given the tremendous metaphysical and moral implications in the context of human dignity—over against some form of classical theism. Furthermore, if what has been stated above is correct, then this will also constitute some of the fundamental *sine qua non* elements for formulating a successful moral argument for God's existence.

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