

One of Morriston's Criticisms of WLC-style Moral Arguments

Majesty of Reason

There are several criticisms of WLC-style moral arguments that I didn't discuss in the video. For instance, lots of philosophers think objective morality doesn't even *need* a grounding. For these philosophers, the fact that (say) <causing unnecessary harm is morally wrong> doesn't need an explanation beyond itself. After all, *any* explanation of a fact must eventually terminate, so what's wrong with terminating moral explanations in terms of basic, self-evident moral facts? As Wes Morriston says:

Why are love and justice and generosity and kindness and faithfulness good? What is there in the depths of reality to make them good? My own preferred answer is: Nothing further. If you like, you may say that they are the ultimate standard of goodness. What makes them the standard? Nothing further. Possessing these characteristics just is good-making. Full stop. Is there some problem with this? Some reason to press on, looking for a 'deeper' answer that only theism can provide? It's not obvious that there is. No matter what story you tell about the ontological ground of moral value, you must at some point come to your own full stop. ([Morriston 2012](#))

Again, it's important to see that proponents of theistic moral realism *themselves* need to stop their explanation at some point — e.g., God is good, *end of story, full stop, nothing further to it* (i.e., there's nothing in virtue of which God is good, nothing that grounds God's being good). Atheists can similarly help themselves to a primitive stopping point in explaining morality. It's not at all implausible, as Wes Morriston notes, to assert that some moral facts are simply fundamental. Virtues like kindness and justice, or acts that increase the flourishing of conscious creatures, are simply *good in themselves*. They are not good in virtue of some *other* property that they hold or some *other* properties or things that they're connected with. Proponents of WLC-style moral arguments typically simply *assume* that moral facts like this need some grounding. But this is not at all obvious, and the contrary is *at least* as plausible as the theist's stopping point.

Wes Morriston continues with his critique:

Craig says that God's moral nature is the ultimate standard of goodness. But what is God's moral nature? By way of explanation, Craig says that God is essentially 'loving, generous, just, faithful, kind, and so forth'. But this raises more questions than it answers. If God's moral nature consists in these properties, one has to wonder what role the existence of a deity who possesses these wonderful properties is supposed to play in Craig's moral ontology.

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The trouble is that this makes it look as if love and generosity and justice and the rest are doing all the work in the proffered account of moral goodness, leaving God no significant role to play. ([Morriston 2012](#))

I think Morrision is spot on here. What's doing the heavy lifting is the value of love, generosity, justice, kindness, and the like. It's flatly irrelevant whether you stick these into God's nature. The explanatory work being done is by the *kindness itself*, **not** the *kindness's being located in God*. And since kindness, generosity, etc. exist whether or not God does, the atheist can equally explain morality in terms of these properties.

Btw, check out Morrision's (2012) article "[God and the ontological foundation of morality](#)", *Religious Studies*, for an elaboration and extended defense of these (and other) criticisms.