



Why God...?
A Moral Cause

The Essentials of Apologetics

Introduction

Does true right and wrong exist or is everything relative?

“You have your way, I have my way. As for the right way, it does not exist.”

– Frederick Nietzsche



Sometimes or Always Wrong?



- Torturing babies for fun.
- The Indian practice of widow burning (sati).
- Priests sexually abusing children and church authorities covering it up.
- Rape.
- Murder of innocent people.

“Nothing succeeds like excess
... nothing is good or bad,
only charming or dull.”

– Oscar Wilde



Is This Charming or Dull ... or Wrong?



Right and Wrong



- Few deny that some acts are always morally wrong.
- This equates to there being objective moral values and duties in life.

“Any argument against the objective reality of moral values will be based on premises that are less obvious than the existence of objective moral values themselves.”

– Louise Antony
Atheist Philosopher



Defining Terms

- **Objective**: independent of opinion (e.g. if 51% of the population said rape was right, it would still be wrong).
- **Values**: whether something is good or bad; a description of *worth*.
- **Duties**: indicates an *oughtness* of action; whether an act is obligatory.



Key Ingredients for Objective Moral Values/Duties



1. **A Standard** – provides a measure of good/bad, right/wrong.
2. **An Authority** – someone/thing that has the right to impose the standard and enforce adherence.

“A man does not call a line
crooked unless he has
some idea of a straight line.”

– C. S. Lewis



A Key Distinction



- There is a distinction between the source of objective moral values and duties and how we come to know them.
- The first is an **ontological** (source/origin) question.
- The second is an **epistemological** (knowledge) question.

The Possible Sources of Objective Moral Values/Duties

1. The universe
2. Society/culture
3. The individual
4. A transcendent Creator



Examining the Options

What is the Source of Objective Moral Values and Duties?

From the Universe?

“A man said to the Universe,
Sir, I exist!
Nevertheless, replied the Universe,
That fact has not created in me
The slightest feeling of obligation.”

- Stephen Crane

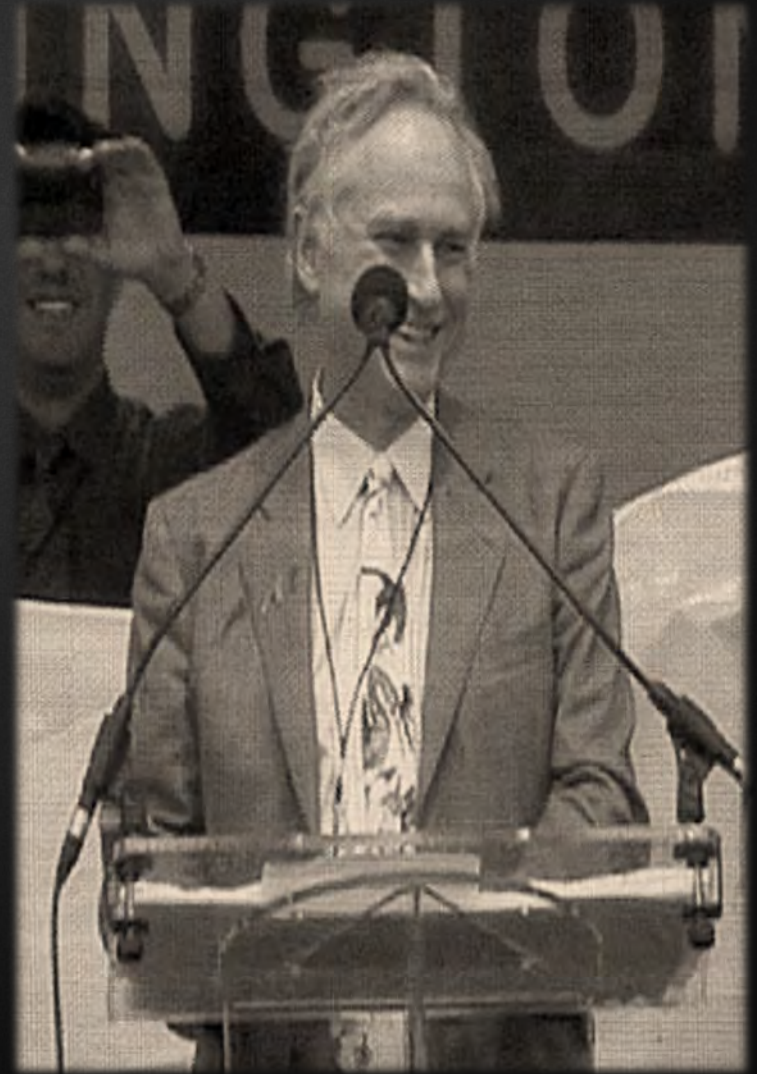


From the Universe?

- From a cause/effect standpoint, an effect must represent its cause in essence/nature.
- How can an amoral, impersonal, meaningless and purposeless universe accidentally create personal moral beings who are obsessed with meaning and purpose?

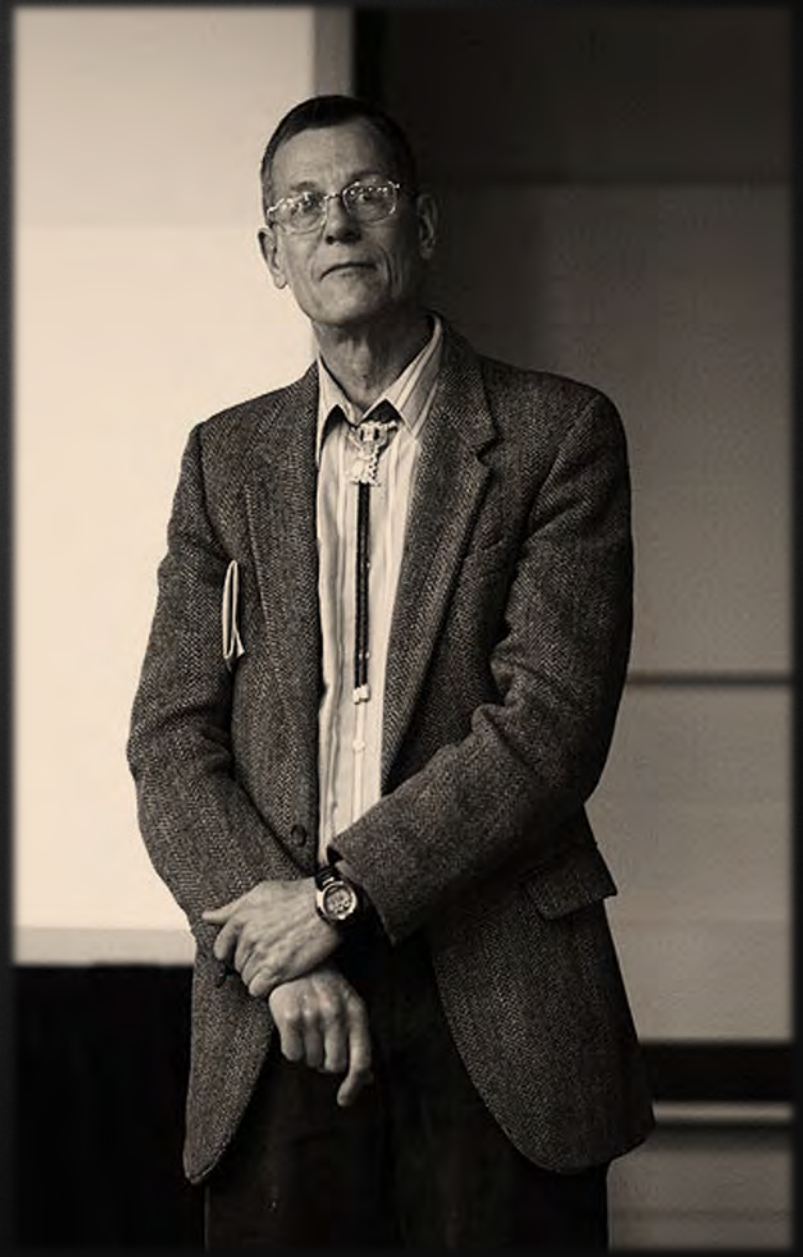


“Humans have always wondered about the meaning of life...life has no higher purpose than to perpetuate the survival of DNA...life has no design, no purpose, **no evil and no good**, nothing but blind pitiless indifference”
– **Richard Dawkins**



“When Darwin deduced the theory of natural selection to explain the adaptations in which he had previously seen the handiwork of God, he knew that he was committing cultural murder. He understood immediately that if natural selection explained adaptations, and evolution by descent were true, then the argument from design was dead and all that went with it, namely the existence of a personal god, free will, life after death, **immutable moral laws**, and ultimate meaning in life.”

– **William Provine**



From Culture?

- In Kenya, the practice of “beading” is carried out. A close family relative of a young girl places a strand of beads around the young girl’s neck.
- This effectively is a temporary engagement and the relative can now have sexual relations with her.
- Some girls are “beaded” when they are six years old.
- Many young girls get pregnant and either have abortions or kill their babies at birth.
- When they reach adulthood, the girls will marry outside of their village, but taboo dictates the girls will never be able to marry if they keep their babies resulting from beading.
- **Is beading right or wrong...?**

Activist battles Kenyan tradition of rape 'beading'

By David McKenzie, CNN
May 11, 2011 4:34 p.m. EDT



Children given beads as gift before rape

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- "Beading" is practiced among the Samburu tribe
- Girls as young as 6 have sex with relatives
- One father says the practice keeps girls from promiscuity

Isiolo, Kenya (CNN) -- "Josephine" is 12 years old and several months pregnant.

She's a member of the Samburu tribe, living in a small village in a remote part of Isiolo in Kenya's Eastern Province. The pre-teen, whose identity is being protected, claims she had sex with a relative -- a rape sanctioned by the Samburu, through a practice called "beading."

If Culture is the Source of Objective Morals/Duties Then...

- Widow burning can be morally acceptable...
- Cannibalism can be morally acceptable...
- Murder can be morally acceptable...
- Unforgiveness can be morally acceptable...
- Rape can be morally acceptable...
- Gratuitously torturing innocent babies can be morally acceptable...



From Culture?

- During the trials at Nuremberg, the Nazi defense attorneys argued that Hitler's soldiers who were on trial were only following the orders of their society and should therefore not be held accountable.
- A judge countered that argument with the question, **“But sir, is there not a law above our laws?”**
- We need an ultimate authority to appeal to in matters that transcend history and culture/society.



From Culture?



- What/who is mankind morally obligated to? Real moral obligation exists, but to whom?
- Consider the issue of the “Reformer’s Dilemma”. How can a culture ever be positively influenced from the outside if the culture is the determiner of good and evil?

From the Individual?

- How do you decide between differing moral opinions if each individual is the ultimate decision maker of what is good and bad?
- How does the statement “For me, rape is wrong, but it might be OK to you” sound?
- With individuals, everything boils down to emotion and emotive responses to morals without moral global absolutes.

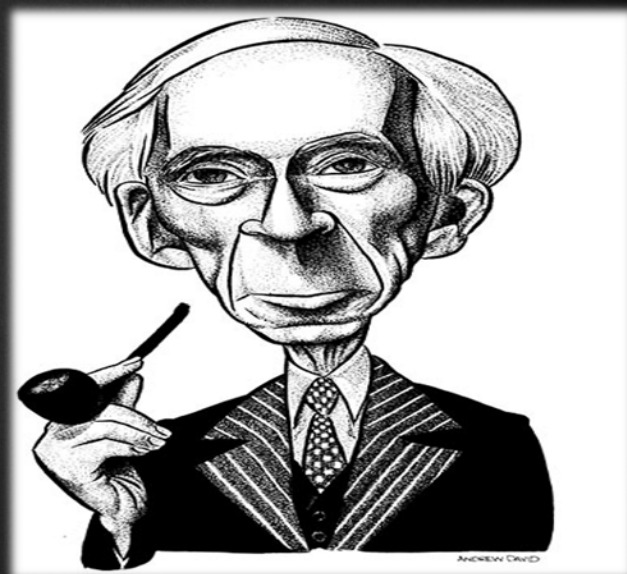


From the Individual?

In his debate with the atheist Bertrand Russell, the Jesuit and philosopher Frederick Copleston looked at Russell and asked, “Lord Russell, do you believe in good and bad?” Russell replied, “Yes”.

Copleston continued, “How do you differentiate between good and bad?” Russell replied, “The same way I differentiate between blue and green or yellow and green.” Copleston then said, “Wait a minute, you differentiate between yellow and green by seeing don’t you?” Russell said, “Yes”.

So Copleston challenged him by asking, “How do you differentiate between good and bad?” Russell replied, “**I differentiate on those matters on the basis of my feelings, what else?**”



People May Espouse Relativism But They Demand Absolutes

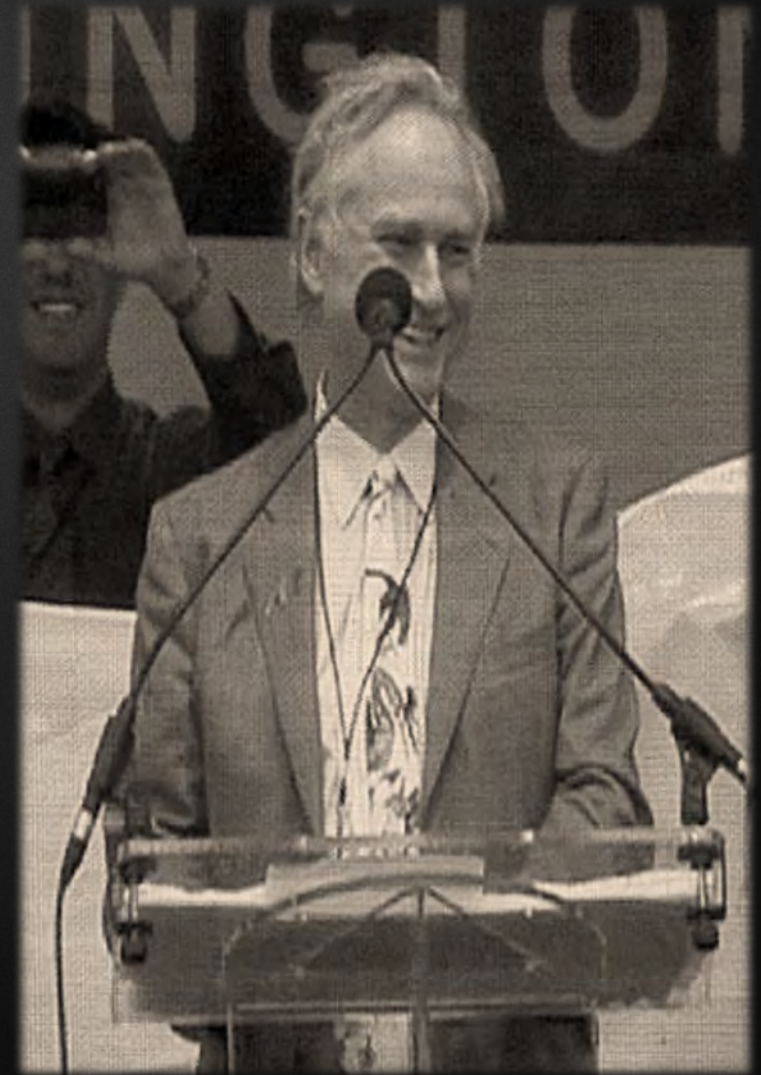


- Watching how people react to being ‘wronged’ proves they want and recognize absolute morality.
- Steal from a relativist; let them be the victim of false advertising; watch how they respond when their spouse is **relatively faithful** to them vs. **absolutely faithful**, and the reaction showcases the recognition of absolute morality.

From the Individual?

“Science cannot tell you if it’s right or wrong for you to eat your own baby’s clone, but it can tell you that’s what you are actually doing. Then you can decide for yourself if you think it’s right or wrong.”

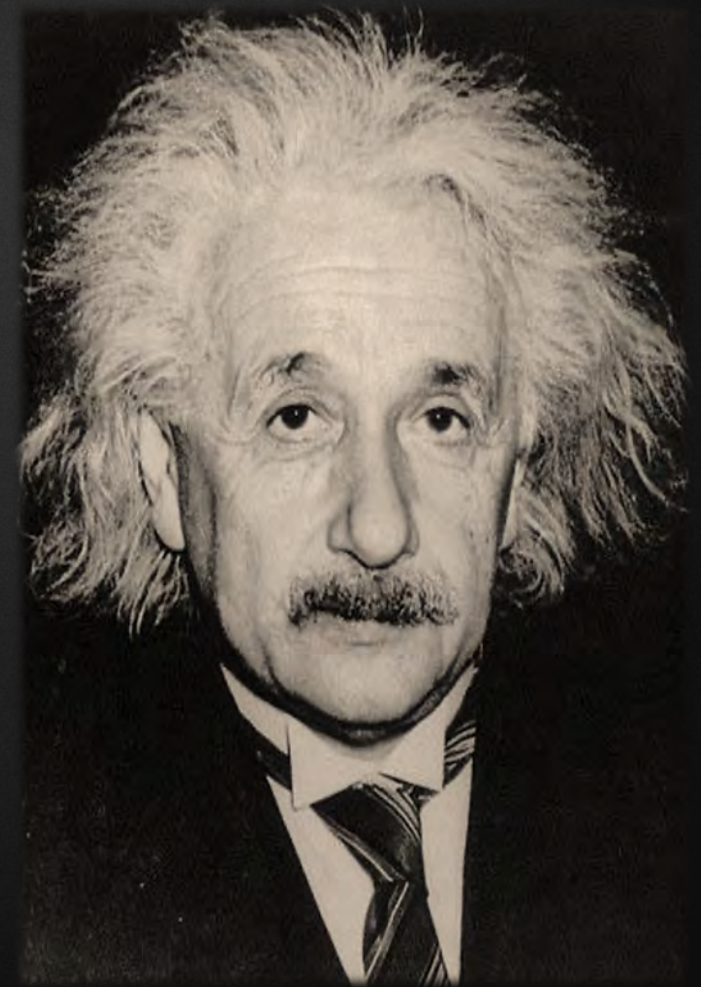
– Richard Dawkins



What About Science?

“You are right in speaking of the moral foundations of science, but you cannot turn round and speak of the scientific foundations of morality.”

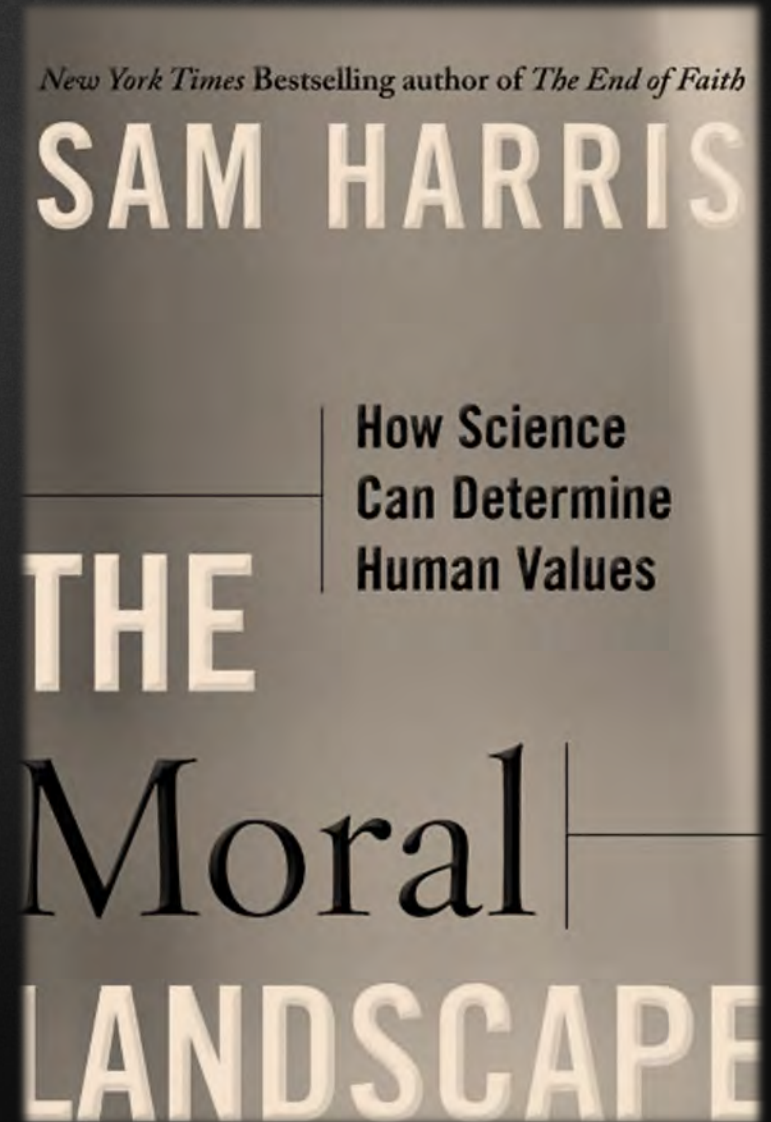
– Albert Einstein



What About Science?

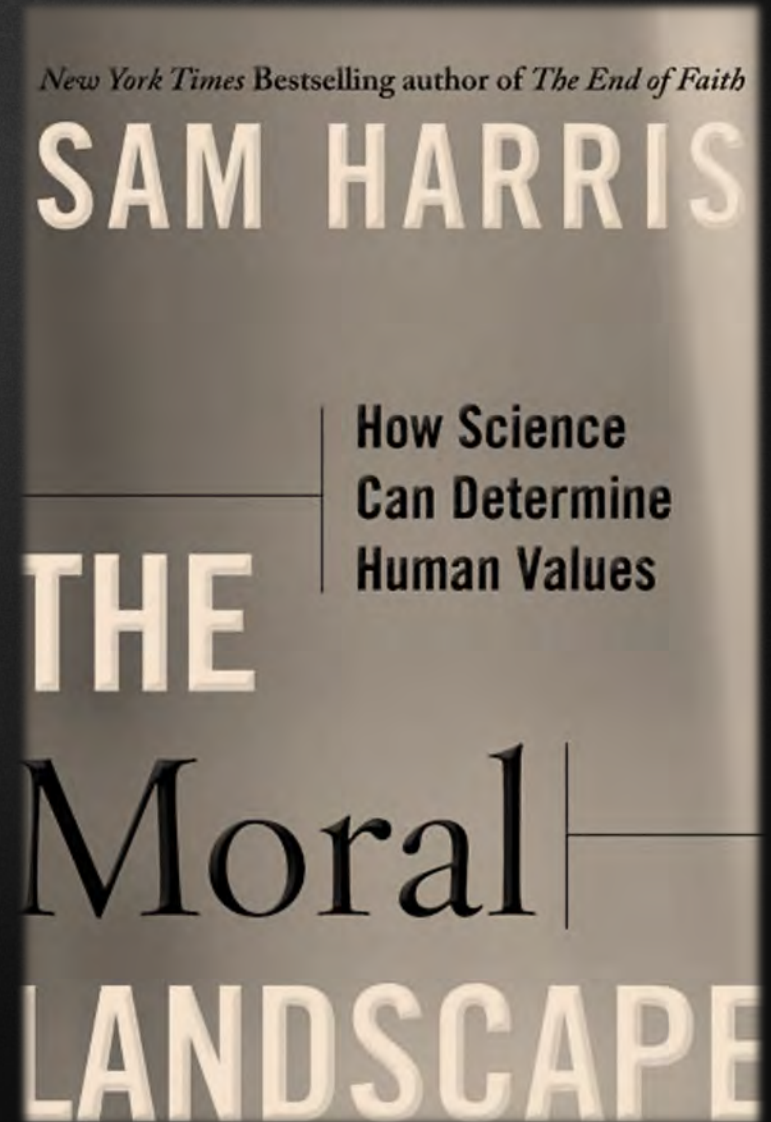
“The moral landscape is a space of real and potential outcomes whose peaks correspond to heights of potential well being and whose valleys represent the deepest possible suffering. . . . Questions about values are really questions about the well being of conscious creatures.”

– Sam Harris



Why Harris' Attempt Fails

- Harris redefines good to be “the flourishing/well-being of conscious creatures”.
- Harris admits in his book that it is possible that the peak of the “moral landscape” could be occupied by flourishing rapists, murderers, and thieves.
- So he admits it's possible that goodness and creaturely well-being are not identical.
- Therefore, Harris' moral theory collapses.



Where Does This Leave Us?

- ~~1. The universe~~
- ~~2. Society/culture~~
- ~~3. The individual~~
4. A transcendent Creator



The Moral Argument for God

Why a Transcendent Creator is Needed for Objective Moral Values and Duties.

One Moral Argument for God



- Laws imply a Law Giver.
- There is an objective Moral Law.
- Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.

Another Moral Argument for God



- If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
- Objective moral values and duties exist.
- Therefore, God exists.

“We might well argue that objective intrinsically prescriptive features supervenient upon natural ones constitute so odd a cluster of qualities and relations that they are unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events without an all-powerful God to create them.”

– J. L. Mackie
Atheist Philosopher



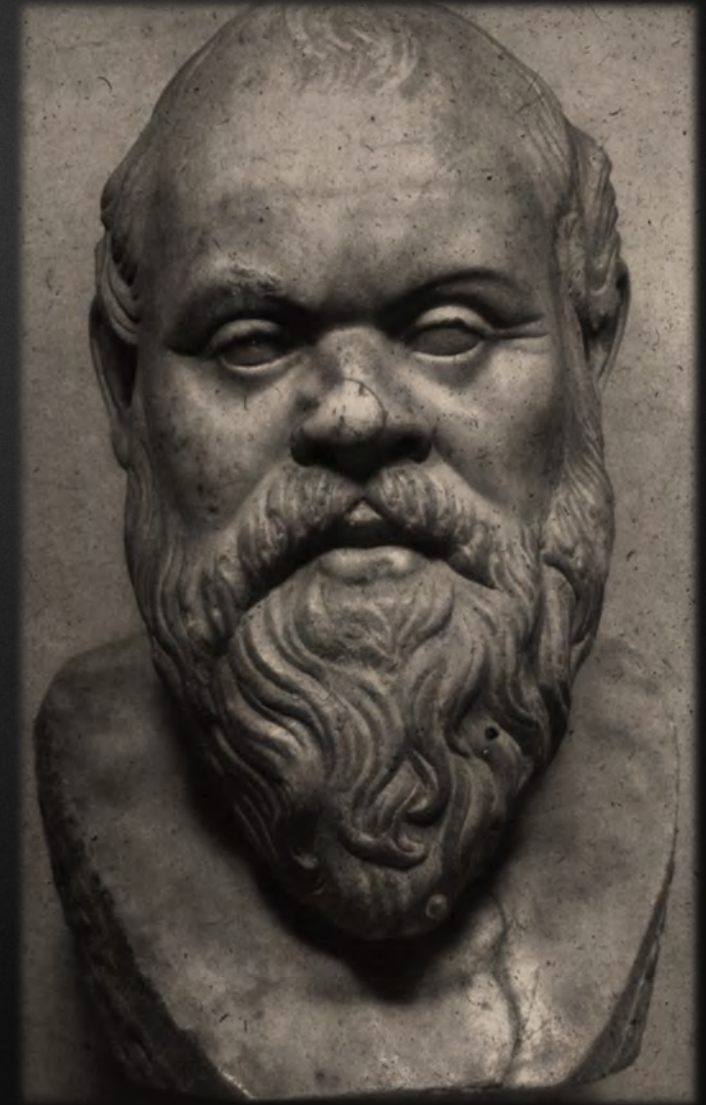
The Atheist Dilemma

- If there's such a thing as evil, you must assume there's such a thing as good.
- If you assume there's such a thing as good, you assume there's such a thing as an absolute and unchanging moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil.
- If you assume there's such a thing as an absolute moral law, you must posit an absolute moral law giver, but that would be God – the one whom the atheist is trying to disprove.
- So now rewind: if there's not a moral law giver, there's no moral law. If there's no moral law, there's no good. If there's no good, there's no evil.



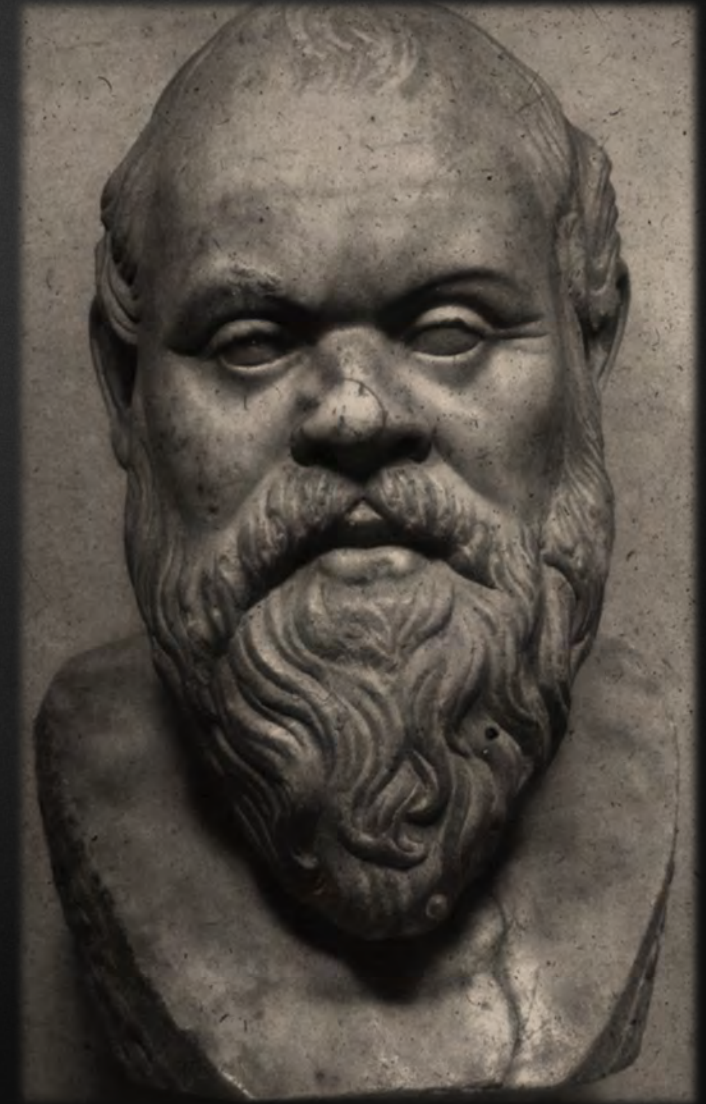
What About the Euthyphro Dilemma?

- Is something good because God approves it, or does God approve something because it's good?
- The first makes God arbitrary.
- The second makes 'good' independent of God.



Solving the Euthyphro Dilemma

- God is the greatest possible being.
- God's nature is what grounds absolute moral right/wrong.
- God has no obligations to anything outside of Himself.
- He simply acts and what he naturally does is good because it comes from His nature/essence.



Conclusions


Final Thoughts

The Source of Objective Moral Values and Duties



- God provides the only objective standard for moral values.
- God provides the only transcendent authority for enforcing the “oughtness” of moral duties.

For More Information/Presentations



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