

Is morality based on God?

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Morality and God

- „There has to be a source of morality.“
- Is there a contradiction between „There is no God“ and „There are duties“?
 - Is there some other incompatibility?
- Supernaturalism: „X is good“ means „God desires X“

The Eutypbro dilemma

- Plato's dialogue Eutypbro:
 - Is an action pious because it pleases the gods, or does it please the gods because it is pious?
- Does the difference between good and evil actions exist only because of God?
- Many believe that the existence of objective morality is linked to the existence of God. But how?
- Dostojewski: If there is no God, everything is permitted.

The morality argument for the existence of God

- C.S. Lewis ("Mere Christianity")
 - "I find that I do not exist on my own, that I am under a law; that somebody or something wants me to behave in a certain way."
 - "What I have got to is a Something which is directing the universe, and which appears in me as a law urging me to do right and making me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong"



30.9.2009

Supernaturalism

- Did God create the duties which exist? Is there a visible link between the existence of God and the existence of duties? Can an atheist coherently believe in duties?
- Gensler: SN: "X is good" means "God desires X".
- Is SN best spelled out with "desire", "wish", or "command"?

The Divine Command Theory (DCT)

- A theory of the link between morality and God.
- X has a duty to do Y if and only if God has commanded Y
 - actions of type Y in general or Y in this situation
- God's commands are "constitutive" for morality

DCT without semantic reducibility

- Robert M. Adams: Modified DCT: "X is obligatory" does not mean "God has commanded X". A posteriori identity. Still:
 - X is obligatory if and only if God has commanded X.
 - What is obligatory is identical with what is commanded by the loving God.

The consistency objection

- Is there a contradiction between “X is obligatory” and “There is no God” (or “God has not commanded X”)

The arbitrariness objection

- On DCT God could make any action obligatory. Also a torturing of a child.
- But that would be evil.
- Can the consequence that God could make any action obligatory be avoided?

The incoherence objection

- DCT implies that one has a duty to obey God's commands. Is that duty based on God's commands too? And so on.

Objection: What does “God is good” then mean?

- To say that God is good becomes, on DCT, meaningless. Whatever God commands would be good.
 - On DCT it means only that God is the source of good and evil.
- Is it impossible that God will ever break a promise?
 - If so, why?
- According to DCT God has no reason to command love rather than hatred and no reason to keep his promises and no reason to act out of love.

Objection: Some duties do not depend on any commands or desires

- To act out of obedience is not the same as to act out of a moral reason.
- A morally mature person is motivated also by intrinsic moral reasons.

- If in two situations there are different duties, then there is a difference in the ~~non-moral properties.~~
- False: If in S1 there is duty D because of the non-moral facts A,B,C,D, then in every situation equal in A,B,C,D there is a duty equal to D.
 - This is false because there can be an additional non-moral fact L because of which D does not obtain.
- Whenever there is a duty D, there is a set of non-moral facts because of which D obtains.

The supervenience view of morality

- Any difference in the moral properties of a situation is due to a difference in their non-moral properties.
- Commands are non-moral facts that sometimes bring about duties.

So, if DCT is false, is God not the
source of morality?

- Not all duties are due to God's commands
 - but some are!

Is morality in some other way dependent upon God?

- Alston:
 - Divine commandments are constitutive of the moral status of action.
 - God's properties are the standard of goodness

Moral arguments for the existence of God

- Distinguish:
 - Arguments from moral facts
 - Arguments from moral sense.
 - Is it probable that evolution would bring about beings with consciousness and a moral sense?
 - Arguments from simplicity
 - Other things being equal a hypothesis which postulates fewer entities and fewer kinds of entities is more probable.

Is there a moral argument for the existence of God?

- Richard Swinburne:
 - „I cannot ... see that, given that there are conscious men acquiring knowledge of the world, that man's awareness of moral truth is something especially difficult to explain by normal scientific processes.“
 - „An argument which claims that the best explanation of the existence of morality is the action of God who created it, must claim that many moral truths are synthetic.“ (EG 1991, 176)
 - Sein Argument: moralische Wahrheiten sind analytisch.

Naturalism and Theism?

- Naturalism is in the defensive here. Does a naturalist have to deny the existence of duties? Or can he say that there are moral truths just as there are mathematical truths?

Task for 5/10/2009

- See website!