

## How successful is the Moral Argument?

One version of moral argument was developed by Immanuel Kant, he analysed the work of Aquinas and devised his proof for the existence of God based on moral behaviour. However it is sometimes questioned whether it is an argument because Kant believed that God's existence could only be established through faith, as opposed to logic. Kant considered his own beliefs about morality and reasoned that in a perfect world behaving morally should result in some sort of happiness. But in our world this rarely happens, therefore there must be something else to motivate people to behave morally. So he thought that we all had a natural moral awareness - laws that we were duty bound to follow, he called these laws 'categorical imperatives'.

Kant's argument can be summarised into stages. We are all obliged to be virtuous through our natural moral awareness. We must aim for the highest level of virtue possible. Virtue should be rewarded with happiness. The goal of being virtuous is called *summum bonum* or the highest good. The word 'ought implies 'can', if we are told we ought to do something then it is something that should be possible. Humans can achieve virtue in a lifetime but because of our imperfect world we cannot ensure that we are rewarded for it. Therefore God must exist to ensure that we can achieve that which we are duty bound to do.

It could be argued that the moral argument is very successful; it strengthens aspects of the existing faith of believers. Those who already believe in God and question where morality comes from might agree with this argument and say that right and wrong morals came directly from God. Because this argument is based upon objective moral laws, it may appeal to those who already believe in unconditional laws.

However, Kant's argument has been criticized; many say that morality can be explained without the need for the existence of God. There is irregularity in morality, for example the clashes of opinions on war and abortion would support this view. Kant's objective duty can be traced back to a combination of social conditioning and human nature. Freud supports this theory and says that the conscience is a product of the unconscious mind or super-ego which continues the work of the parents in limiting the behaviour of a child.

Also the concept of objective law has been challenged several times; Kant believed that it was unreasonable that we should be required to aim for something which is outside our reach. However Brian Davies has questioned this and says that sometimes it is not unreasonable to aim for

something even if it seems impossible for example: an A grade for all four A levels.

Another argument in opposition is that even if we accept all these premises to the moral argument, it could never in fact prove the existence of God. All this argument does establish is that there is a law giver of some kind. It does not point to an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God. Therefore it has lead Brian Davies to suggest that Kant's argument might not only point to a being who is a law giver but a 'Kantian - minded angel'.

So the moral argument is successful in some ways as it furthers the beliefs of those who already have faith in God. On the other hand I don't think it is successful in providing a proof for God's existence. The argument blunders in many ways as the existence of a moral God may lead to the existence of moral laws but the existence of moral laws does not point to the existence of a moral God.

## Bibliography

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