

For the definitive version of this review, see *Religious Studies*

William Lane Craig, Erik J. Wielenberg, Adam Lloyd Johnson (Ed.) *A Debate on God and Morality: What is the Best Account of Objective Moral Values and Duties?* (New York and London: Routledge, 2020). Pp. xii + 234. £32.99 (Pbk). ISBN 9780367135652.

In 2018, William Lane Craig and Erik Wielenberg debated whether God is the best explanation of objective moral values and duties. This book contains their full debate, along with five new essays from David Baggett, Michael Huemer, Mark Linville, J. P. Moreland, and Wesley Morriston, as well as additional responses to these essays from Craig and Wielenberg. This book is extremely clear and well organised. It is also lively, engaging, and thorough. I recommend it to anyone interested in the relationship between God and morality. I will summarise the main parts of the book before offering comments.

This book is about the best explanation of objective morality. More precisely, it is about whether Craig's theistic view provides a better explanation of objective morality than Wielenberg's atheistic view. Craig and Wielenberg both defend realist views of morality. Craig defends a theistic view that is inspired by the work of Robert Adams and William Alston. On Craig's view, moral obligations are explained by God's commands, and moral values are explained by God's nature. Very roughly, the idea is that something is morally obligatory just in case and because God commands it, and something is morally good just in case and because it relevantly resembles God's nature. According to Craig, God is essential to explaining morality because moral properties obtain only in virtue of God's commands and nature.

Wielenberg, on the other hand, defends an atheistic view that he calls *Godless Normative Realism*. Wielenberg's view is essentially a combination of atheism and robust normative realism—the view, roughly, that moral properties are non-natural, irreducible features of things that obtain independently of us. Central to Wielenberg's view is the idea that non-moral properties *make* moral properties obtain. For example, the non-moral property of being an intentional deception makes the moral property of being wrong obtain. According to Wielenberg, there is no explanation why non-moral properties make moral properties obtain. It is simply a brute fact about reality. On Wielenberg's view, then, God is not essential to explaining morality because non-moral properties make moral properties obtain, regardless of whether God exists.

The Craig-Wielenberg debate considers the relative plausibility of these views with respect to their explanations of objective morality. Craig argues that his view is more plausible than Wielenberg's, and Wielenberg argues the opposite. Very briefly, Craig argues that Wielenberg's view is implausible because it (i) involves extravagant metaphysical claims, (ii) has an unintelligible account of supervenience, (iii) has a flawed account of moral obligations, and (iv) makes moral knowledge impossible. Wielenberg, by contrast, argues that Craig's view is implausible because it (i) singles out divine commands as the only possible source of moral obligation, (ii) implies that non-believers and psychopaths have no moral obligations, and (iii) makes morally wrong acts inexplicable, since God inexplicably commands people to do what he knows they won't. The Craig-Wielenberg debate is excellent. It is clear, focused, and analytically rigorous. It is worth emphasising that Craig and Wielenberg don't consider the relative plausibility of other views that purport to explain objective morality, such as naturalist views. They only consider the relative plausibility of their own views. This decision to narrow the focus of the debate is especially welcome because it makes for a detailed discussion of the relative plausibility of these two prominent views. There is much here for readers to pore over. It will be essential reading for those working at the intersection of philosophy of religion and moral philosophy.

In addition to the Craig-Wielenberg debate, this book also contains five new essays from other philosophers who have written responses to the debate. These essays are high-

quality and each make important contributions in their own right. I will offer summaries of these essays to give you a flavour of their content.

In his essay, J. P. Moreland ('Wielenberg and Emergence: Borrowed Capital on the Cheap') outlines a strong version of naturalism and argues that Wielenberg's view is in tension with it. In addition to this, Moreland advances metaphysical extravagance worries for Wielenberg's view, arguing that Wielenberg's view fits better with a theistic than an atheistic worldview. Moreland's essay offers a careful examination of how Wielenberg's view fits with wider issues in metaphysics and philosophy of mind. It is well worth reading, especially if one wants to consider Wielenberg's view in relation to broader philosophical issues.

In his essay, Wesley Morriston ('Does Morality Have a Theological Foundation?') clarifies Craig's view of goodness and asks why we should prefer it to an alternative that Craig rejects. Morriston begins by noting that on Craig's view, love, justice, kindness, and so on, are good only because God is loving, just, kind, and so on. Morriston then asks why we shouldn't prefer the alternative view that love, justice, kindness, and the rest, are good-making properties on their own, without any reference to God. On this alternative view, things are good simply by virtue of having these features, regardless of whether there is a God who has them. Morriston's essay expertly engages with Craig's previous written work on the subject, anticipating various responses that Craig might employ. It also offers a particularly clear and insightful statement of Craig's views that many readers will appreciate.

In his essay, David Baggett ('Psychopathy and Supererogation') considers two objections that came up in the Craig-Wielenberg debate. The first is Wielenberg's objection that Craig's view implies that psychopaths have no moral obligations. The second is Wielenberg's objection that Craig can't accommodate the supererogatory because Christianity teaches that God commands us to 'be perfect' (Matt 5:48). Baggett carefully responds to each of these objections. In response to the first objection, Baggett argues that Craig's view doesn't imply that psychopaths have no moral obligations, and that even if it did, Craig might have the resources to mitigate the implausibility of this implication. In response to the second objection, Baggett argues that Craig can in fact accommodate the supererogatory, because Christianity doesn't rule out supererogation. Baggett's essay offers an excellent reconstruction of the Craig-Wielenberg dialectic. It also engages persuasively with the literature on psychopaths and supererogation.

In his essay, Michael Huemer ('Groundless Morals') advances several arguments against Craig's view and defends his own brand of robust moral realism. Most notably, Huemer argues (i) that Craig's view offers a subjectivist rather than objectivist account of morality, (ii) that Craig's view can't plausibly explain why we should obey God's commands, and (iii) that Craig's view leads to moral absurdity because it implies that seemingly false claims, like 'Were God's nature hateful, then hatefulness would be good', are true. In defence of his own brand of robust moral realism, Huemer defends the claims that morality can be objective without God, and that morality requires no source or external explanation. Huemer's essay complements Wielenberg's arguments very well. It makes for a forceful defence of the atheistic moral realist position that really adds to the book.

Finally, in his essay, Mark Linville ('Darwin, Duties, and the Demiurge') advances an evolutionary debunking argument against Wielenberg's view. Linville argues that Wielenberg's view is implausible because it undercuts justification for thinking that our moral beliefs are true. According to Linville, if atheism and evolution are true, then our moral beliefs are the product of natural selection and so were selected for their adaptiveness. But if this is right and what explains our having moral beliefs is their being adaptive, then this undercuts justification for thinking that our moral beliefs are true, because there's no good reason to think there's any connection between our moral beliefs' being adaptive and their being true. Linville then argues that this argument only poses problems for atheists, because

theists can plausibly claim that human moral faculties are designed—perhaps indirectly through a long process of directed evolution—for the purpose of discerning moral truth. Linville’s essay offers a clear statement of evolutionary debunking arguments. It also offers novel responses to Wielenberg’s ‘third factor’ response that are well worth considering.

Now that I have summarised the main parts of the book, there are three comments I want to make about it. The first has to do with Platonism. Throughout the debate, Craig claims that Wielenberg’s view is implausible because it is committed to Platonism, the view that abstract objects exist. But as it emerges in the footnotes and Wielenberg’s later response essay, Wielenberg is not committed to this view. This book, I think, would have been better if this issue of Platonism had been sorted out ahead of time. Too much ink is spilt over this ultimately distracting confusion.

The second comment has to do with Craig’s view. Throughout the book, Craig is intentionally non-committal about whether theists should adopt a reductive or non-reductive divine command theory. On the reductive view, moral obligations are *identical* to God’s commands. On the non-reductive view, moral obligations are *distinct from but explained by* God’s commands. It seems to me (and I think Wielenberg) that Craig should adopt the reductive view. There are three reasons for this. First, the non-reductive view is subject to the same sorts of objections that Craig raises for Wielenberg’s view. For example, the non-reductive view is metaphysically extravagant because it posits irreducible moral obligations, since it denies that moral obligations are identical or reducible to God’s commands. Second, the reductive view has a plausible answer to the question, ‘Why should we obey God’s commands?’ Namely, that we should obey God’s commands because God’s commands just *are* our moral obligations—they are one and the same. This answer, I think, is more plausible than the seemingly circular one Craig endorses. Namely, that we should obey God’s commands because God commands us to. Third, adopting the reductive view would serve to demarcate the differences between Craig’s and Wielenberg’s views more clearly. It would also serve to answer contributors’ complaints that Craig’s view seems ‘incomplete or rough around the edges’ (117).

The third and final comment I want to make has to do with metaphysical extravagance. Throughout the book, you’ll find the claim that Wielenberg’s view is metaphysically extravagant. This claim is certainly true because Wielenberg’s view posits non-natural, irreducible moral properties. But one important issue that is surprisingly not addressed is whether Wielenberg’s view is *more* extravagant than Craig’s view. (Note that this issue must be addressed in order to assess the relative plausibility of these views.) I for one am not confident that Wielenberg’s view is more extravagant than Craig’s view, because it is not clear to me that positing non-natural, irreducible moral properties is more extravagant than positing a God. By my lights, these views are both fairly extravagant, at least when compared with rival, naturalist views. This book, I think, would have benefited from having a discussion on this important yet neglected issue.

Despite these comments, *A Debate on God and Morality: What is the Best Account of Objective Moral Values and Duties?* is an excellent book that deserves to be widely read and discussed. I hope to see its arguments developed and discussed in the literature to come.

St. John Lambert
University of Southampton
sjl1g13@soton.ac.uk