A Moral Argument for God's Existence, The Peircean Perspective, and an Interpretive

Scheme for the Success of the Twelve Steps

by

Andrew Modaff

A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College

Fall 2020

A Moral Argument for God's Existence, The Peircean Perspective, and an Interpretive

Scheme for the Success of the Twelve Steps

by Andrew Modaff

APPROVED:

_____
Dr. Mary Magada-Ward, Thesis Director
Department Chair, Philosophy and Religious Studies

Dr. Ron Bombardi, Second Reader
Professor, Philosophy and Religious Studies

_____
Dr. Philip Phillips, Committee Chair
Associate Dean, University Honors College

DEDICATION

To my family and friends, my love, and to eight years: "Love and tolerance is our code."

ABSTRACT

Philosopher and theologian Dr. William Lane Craig is a well-known proponent of

moral arguments for God's existence. In the course of arguing for his own formulation of

a moral argument in his seminal work *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and

Apologetics*, Dr. Craig makes critical mistakes that unveil deeper problematic

assumptions in his thinking about morality. The Euthyphro Dilemma looms large over

Craig's arguments, and he fails to overcome it. These shortcomings are expounded in

Chapter I and offered a remedy in Chapter II in the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce.

His pragmatism gives us much more adequate, workable conceptions of morality and

ethics than Craig offers. Chapter III illustrates the advantages of Peirce over Craig in

application by showing that the conceptual framework of the Alcoholics Anonymous

recovery program can be understood as a way of talking about the Peircean conceptual

framework, but not the Craigean framework.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: A MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

Introduction

In his seminal work *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, philosopher Dr. William Lane Craig offers several arguments in support of the existence of God. Craig finds himself in good company; some of the most brilliant minds in the western world have argued the same conclusion and in similar fashion. For millennia, Christian philosophers have proposed that a divine Creator is the only satisfying explanation for the contingent nature of the cosmos and the fine-tuning of fundamental physical constants that hold the universe together; others have inferred from the very *idea* of a supremely perfect being that this being must necessarily exist. In contemporary discourse, arguments from the existence of objective morality to the existence of God have become some of the most popular in the apologist arsenal. In Chapters 3 and 4 of *Reasonable Faith,* Craig offers his own formulation and defense of a moral argument for God's existence.

Craig lays out his moral argument in standard form as follows:

(1) If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.

(2) Objective moral values and duties do exist.

(3) Therefore, God exists.[1]

Clearly, the logical form of the two premises and the conclusion is a substitution instance of the valid argument form known as *modus tollens*, in which the denial of the consequent of a conditional statement allows one to deny the antecedent; in this case, the

---

1.William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 172.

denial of the nonexistence of objective moral values and duties entails the denial of the nonexistence of God. I will be homing in on premise (2), not with the intent of demonstrating its falsity, but to show that Craig's warrant for asserting the truth of (2) is too weak, and thus will not do the work for the conclusion of the argument.

Significance and Literature Review

The significance of a refutation of moral arguments such as Craig's cannot be overstated. His moral argument and the defense thereof exemplifies a way of philosophizing that I will directly juxtapose with the normative thought of Charles Sanders Peirce. My aim is to challenge several unnecessary presuppositions I see behind Craig's thought that determine what kind of questions one must pose while engaging in moral philosophy as well as what an acceptable moral theory must be able to accomplish: (1) the idea that living a good life must consist in following a set of mind-independent, universal *rules* or *laws*, and so an inquiry into the good life is an inquiry into something unique and external from moral agency; (2) that these rules must obtain a level of objectivity and universality tantamount to that of, say, natural facts; (3) that meta-ethical theories should account for a Who or What *makes/justifies/legislates* these rules; and (4) that a transcendent Divine "Mind," or God, is the only possible legislature that can satisfy (3).

There is a clear divide in the literature on moral realism between theistic and non-theistic frameworks. There are Christian philosophers and theologians, such as Olli-Pekka Vainio, who argue similarly to William Lane Craig against different naturalist

and/or non-theistic meta-ethical theories.[2] They point to a seeming inability in naturalism to provide any grounding for obligations; they are suspicious of the metaphysical queerness of non-theistic, non-natural theories like those proposed by philosopher Eric Wielengberg. Ronald Lindsay argues that we *have* the necessary foundations for objectivity in our ethics without God,[3] while Melis Erdur sees problems inherent in both moral realism *and* antirealism.[4] Several philosophers, including Wielenberg, Smythe and Rectenwald, have directly challenged Craig's moral argument or have responded to criticism from Craig of their own work.

Eric Wielenberg, in defending his non-natural, non-theistic theory against Craig's criticisms, deals mainly with the idea of brute, metaphysically necessary moral truths that do *not* require God as an external explanation, an idea that Craig challenges.[5] Smythe and Rectenwald primarily focus on premise (1) of Craig's moral argument (as it seems most philosophers do) and propose the idea of moral truths that are *logically* necessary, thus

---

2. Olli-Pekka Vainio, "Objective Morality after Darwin (and without God)?" *Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 56, no. 4 (July 1, 2015), 584–92. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2307134&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

3. Ronald A. Lindsay, "How Morality Has the Objectivity That Matters -- Without God." *Free Inquiry* 34, no. 5 (August 1, 2014), 16–23. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2229149&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

4. Melis Erdur, "A Moral Argument against Moral Realism." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: An International Forum* 19, no. 3 (June 1, 2016), 591–602. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2334162&site=eds-live&scope=site.

5. Erik J. Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism." *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2009), 23–41. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2131762&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

they do not require a God in order to be true.[6] What I found lacking in these responses to Craig is a criticism of his nominalist metaphysics insofar as his metaphysics are detrimental to premise (2) of his moral argument. R. Scott Smith details these nominalist metaphysics, but his critique is from a theological standpoint and does not directly challenge the moral argument's conclusion that God exists. My metaphysical objection to premise (2) is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

Contention

I contend that Craig's nominalist denial of the existence of properties, along with his denial of moral Platonic forms and naturalistic accounts of morality at large, undermine his defense of premise (2); the metaphysic he provides does not support the vague notions of value and of moral experience that he falls back on in asserting the truth of the premise. Furthermore, I will show that Craig's nominalism commits him to an account of objective moral values and duties that, while he believes it to successfully circumvent the Euthyphro dilemma, in fact renders his argument trivial and circular. In what proceeds, I will utilize as a springboard the explanation of Craig's nominalism provided by R. Scott Smith in his essay "Craig, Anti-Platonism, and Objective Morality" in order to clearly present my own metaphysical objections to Craig's nominalism insofar as his nominalism is detrimental to his moral argument.[7] I will begin with a short examination of a few elements of premise (1).

---

6. Thomas W. Smythe and Michael Rectenwald, "Craig on God and Morality." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51:3, no. 203 (September 1, 2011), 331–38. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2178004&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
        7. Research for this chapter involved a rigorous analysis of chapters 3 and 4 of William Lane Craig's *Reasonable Faith* in order to present a charitable interpretation of his moral

The First Premise

Perhaps there has never been a more ambiguous word in our lexicon than "God." But in order to begin evaluating this argument, one will require some idea of what Craig himself means by "God." The upshot of this argument is the establishment of "the existence of a Being that is the embodiment of the ultimate Good, which is the source of the objective moral values we experience in the world."[8] Furthermore, "The moral argument thus brings us to a personal, necessarily existent being who is the locus and source of moral goodness. It thereby complements in an important way the conclusions of the cosmological and teleological arguments."[9] Craig certainly does not purport to prove the existence of the God of Christianity with the moral argument alone; but it is part and parcel of a cumulative case for this God in conjunction with other arguments found in *Reasonable Faith*, a work on Christian apologetics. Do the quotations above provide a clear, unambiguous definition of "God?" Not remotely, but that is what is on offer in Craig's presentation of the moral argument. To help us get off the ground, we might say that Craig is making a minimal case for something approximating a "greatest conceivable being"[10] considered only insofar as It possesses some moral attributes.

---

argument for critique. I conducted background research investigating contemporary moral realism at large, as well as examining primary sources from philosophers who have rejected Craig's argument and from those whose atheistic (or non-theistic) objective moral frameworks have faced criticism from Craig directly. In the following, I have utilized the clarity I have gained from this background research in the contemporary meta-ethical lexicon as well as other pertinent metaphysical concepts to formulate my own reasoned objections to Craig's argument.

 8. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 104.

 9. Craig, 183. This notion of "a personal, necessarily existent being who is the locus and source of moral goodness" is not introduced until the very end of Craig's discussion of the moral argument.

 10. Craig, 182.

Acknowledgement of the logical form of premise (1) is called for as well. Notice that the premise is a conditional statement, and conditional statements are false just in case the antecedent is true and the consequent is false. The truth conditions of (1), then, admit the possibility that the antecedent "God does not exist" could be false, while the consequent "Objective moral values and duties do not exist" could be true. Clearly, Craig does not want to admit that objective moral values and duties could fail to exist at the same time that God exists; for then how could one *prove* that God exists by the mere fact that objective moral values and duties exist, as the argument purports? A conditional statement will not do the work Craig wants it to do; it seems to me that the biconditional statement provides the security that he desires. Premise (1) would read: God does not exist if and only if objective moral values and duties do not exist. Biconditional statements are true just in case the component statements have the same truth value; so formulated, premise (1) would claim that objective moral values and duties cannot exist without God, and vice-versa (that is to say, they are mutually implicative).[11]

So we have a general, albeit vague, idea of the God for which Craig is arguing, along with an understanding of the logic with which he is working. Next, I will delineate the details of his nominalist position, which greatly informs his rejection of one of his main opponents, namely, Atheistic Moral Platonism.

Nominalism

For an examination of Craig's nominalism, I will rely on Dr. Smith's analysis and critique in his essay "Craig, Anti-Platonism, and Objective Morality." On the reality of

---

11. Of course, we will see that Craig attempts to solve this logical problem with metaphysics alone, which is a major target in my critique later on.

abstract objects such as properties, numbers, and propositions, Craig adopts a nominalist

position, which is simply the denial of the existence of these abstract objects; only

concrete particulars can be said to exist. It is his elimination of properties in his ontology

that I am interested in here. To take an example of property, when we speak of all the

brown dogs that exist in the world, we are tempted to say that they share in common a

kind of *brownness* beyond just the way we speak about them. Simply put, Craig denies

that there is any *one* property existing as some sort of abstract object that every brown

dog somehow participates in, that every brown dog is an instance of *brownness*; the

existence of many concrete, particular dogs that all happen to be brown is just a matter of

brute fact.

 Indeed, for Craig, we are looking too deeply into a metaphysical analysis of what

we call properties or traits. We need go no further than giving a *scientific* account of how

each particular brown dog comes to be brown. Smith explains: "Similarly, snow is white

does not require the existence of a property, whiteness. Rather, it is a matter of

observation that snow is white. We could provide a causal story why snow is white,

which bypasses any need for further explanation by appealing to something more

fundamental, like a white property."[12] For Craig, engaging in property-*talk* does not

automatically commit us to anything ontologically. In his blog on Reasonablefaith.org, he

---

 12. R Scott Smith, "Craig, Anti-Platonism, and Objective Morality," *Philosophia Christi* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2017), 333. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2365680&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

insists that we "don't read ontology off of language."[13] Talking this way about brown

dogs is simply a matter of convenience.

Here, we should note an important conclusion of Smith's analysis: this

nominalism, which Craig qualifies as being of an *austere* variety, cannot retain

qualitative facts about *anything*, much less human beings. Smith claims that under austere

nominalism, "concrete particulars are simples with no internal differentiation of

properties."[14] Now, since Craig has given up the existence of properties, Smith tells us

that we have to speak of concrete particulars as "fully-charactered individuators."[15] It

seems that our property-talk must now be replaced by character-talk. Returning to the

example of brown dogs, each particular brown dog would just be a fully-charactered

individuator (that character includes being brown); again, there is no *brownness* present

in each dog.

The broad metaphysical problem is this: given the simplicity of concrete

particulars under austere nominalism, Smith believes that, "Thus, ontologically, the

individuator and the character (or quality) cannot be different things."[16] This implies that

we should be able to do away with either the individuator (in which we lose particularity)

or with character (in which we are left with individuators that do no particularizing), but

this is untenable. These options leave us with an incoherent metaphysic in which qualities

cannot be preserved because quality, or character, and individuator cannot be distinct;

13. William Lane Craig, "Nominalism and Natural Law," Reasonablefaith.org, last modified August 30, 2015, https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/nominalism-and-natural-law/.
14. Smith, "Craig, Anti-Platonism, and Objective Morality," 336.
15. Smith, 336.
16. Smith, 336.

this problem will have a major impact on Craig's talk of moral values. So much for his nominalism vis-a-vis properties, and before I move on to his rejection of Atheistic Moral Platonism, I want to make mention of how nominalism connects with Craig's position in moral realism.

Property-talk and Moral Realism

Craig's nominalistic property-talk is an adoption of a move made by Rudolph Carnap to distinguish claims made within a particular linguistic framework (e.g., property-talk) and claims made outside that framework.[17] The Carnapian program helps to clarify Craig's qualification of his moral realist position: "I mean to claim that certain things are objectively good/evil and certain actions objectively right/wrong… Moral realism in this sense is the view that moral statements are objectively true or false. Moral realism in another sense is the view that there are mind-independent objects out there which are moral values or duties and which must be included in your ontological inventory of things."[18] Again, though Craig makes statements that quantify over terms like *good* and *bad*, he is *not* acknowledging the existence of an object. Craig is a moral realist only inasmuch as he believes that moral statements are truth-functional.

Atheistic Moral Platonism

Craig's nominalism leads to a rejection of what he calls Atheistic Moral Platonism, a major opponent to the theistic moral worldview. It is important for my

17. William Lane Craig, "Anti-Realism and Truth," Reasonablefaith.org, last modified November 2, 2014, https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/anti-realism-and-truth/.

18. William Lane Craig, "Anti-Platonism and Moral Realism," Reasonablefaith.org, last modified July 20, 2014, https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/anti-platonism-and-moral-realism/.

purposes here to examine his objections because the argumentation therein betrays the problems nominalism poses for his moral argument. As he defines it, "Atheistic Moral Platonists affirm that objective moral values do exist but are not grounded in God. Indeed, moral values have no further foundation. They just exist."[19] Above, I acknowledged that Craig's adoption of the Carnap distinction allows him to talk about moral values without being committed to an ontology of moral values. Thus, Craig rejects the independent existence of the moral values as Platonic, abstract objects on several grounds: (1) that the existence of an abstract moral object, such as *Justice*, is too metaphysically strange and extravagant to comprehend; (2) that the existence of these moral abstract objects cannot provide the obligatoriness of moral duties; and (3) that human beings should blindly evolve in such a manner that would allow us to apprehend these moral abstractions is too improbable to believe.

I find all of Craig's objections to Atheistic Moral Platonism to be, at the very least, well-informed by his nominalism. But it is crucial to recognize something very troubling in one of these complaints. In the exposition of objection (1), he claims that to treat the existence of moral values as abstract entities seems odd; clearly, he says, "Moral values seem to exist as *properties* of persons, not as mere abstractions…"[20] This is problematic because, as noted in the discussion of his nominalism, properties *per se* do not exist for Craig. Now, Craig's Carnapian program works well enough when he is caught conveniently talking about *brown* dogs or *red* apples; he can just simply step

19. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 178.
20. Craig, 178 (emphasis added).

outside of that property-talk framework, step into a nominalist framework and give a scientific account of why this particular apple appears red.

But when we step outside the property-talk framework, how are we to interpret a claim that explicitly calls something (moral values) a property? This certainly feels like a meta-problem for Craig, because part of the answer must be that properties do not actually exist; at this point, the utility of the property-talk framework seems to crumble. Just what are moral values, then? No explanation is provided in *Reasonable Faith*, and it is troubling that Atheistic Moral Platonism can be dismissed so confidently on these grounds. In the course of his argumentation, he seems to be treating properties as if they actually do exist.

Naturalism

Now that we have a clear understanding of Craig's rejection of properties, the consequences his nominalism has for the preservation of qualitative facts, and his rejection of Atheistic Moral Platonism, I will make quick mention of his rejection of naturalist accounts of morality before leveling my objections to premise (2) of his moral argument. Naturalistic moral realism and antirealism are the other great opponents to the theistic moral worldview. For him, any denial of the transcendent leaves the naturalist with absolutely no foundation for objective moral values.[21] Indeed, he is confident in the consequences for morality under naturalism: "If theism is false, why think that human

---

21. More will be said in Chapter 2 on this notion of objectivity, but Craig has something to say on the subject: "To say that something is objective is to say that it is independent of what people think or perceive…. To say that there are objective moral values is to say that something is good or evil independently of whether any human being believes it to be so. Similarly, to say that we have objective moral duties is to say that certain actions are right or wrong for us independently of whether any human being believes them to be so." *Reasonable Faith*, 173.

beings have objective moral value? After all, on the naturalistic view, there's nothing special about human beings."[22]

Furthermore, the naturalist arguments against the existence of objective moral values and duties equally lack substance. He believes that naturalism poses no threat to his moral argument, whether the naturalist affirms objective morality without reference to God or attempts to disprove objective morality in light of naturalism. His specific critiques are familiar and uninteresting, but we should recognize that he uses the term "moral *property*" nine times on page 177 while attacking a naturalist account of moral-natural supervenience. We are faced with the same problem revealed in the discussion of Atheistic Moral Platonism: what could the nominalist Craig possibly mean by "moral property?" He again seems to be treating properties as if they exist; if they do not, what is the sense in arguing over them with the naturalist?

Objections to Premise Two

With the stage finally set, I can move to the second premise of the moral argument in which Craig claims that objective moral values and duties do exist. His defense of the claim consists in this: we just simply apprehend a realm of objective moral values and duties in our *moral perceptions and experience*, perceptions and experience that we have no good reason to doubt. Craig allies himself with philosopher William Sorley when he claims that "there is no more reason to deny the objective reality of moral values than the objective reality of the physical world."[23] And not only do we all plainly grasp what seems good or bad to each of us in our own *subjective* experiences, but it is

---

22. Craig, 173.
23. Craig, 179.

equally as self-evident that these sentiments comport with what is *independently*

(objectively) good or bad beyond our subjective moral perceptions. In fact, for Craig, the

belief in our apprehension of an objective moral realm through moral perception and

experience is so unquestionably warranted that "People who fail to see this are just

morally handicapped, and there is no reason to allow their impaired vision to call into

question what we see clearly."[24]

There are two questions I will pose and explore in order to identify the flaws in

Craig's argument. The first concerns an issue I have alluded to several times and I am

now prepared to pose it directly: What exactly does he *mean* by "objective moral values

and duties"? Regrettably, Craig proclaims the soundness of his argument and moves on

before giving any definitive answer. As we have seen, he offers plenty of negative

philosophy on the idea of moral values: objective moral values are *not* the products of

socio-biological evolution, nor are they Platonic abstract objects, nor are they unique,

non-physical properties that supervene on natural properties. Fine, but what *are* objective

moral values, then? If we recall his objections to Atheistic Moral Platonism, we find the

closest that Craig gets to any sort of moral ontology: "Moral values seem to exist as

properties of persons, not as mere abstractions…[.]"[25] As I noted before, this is a

befuddling claim in light of his nominalism. We must not read ontology off of language,

but how are we to charitably interpret his claim within a nominalist framework?

He has no recourse to the same method of analyzing the *whiteness* of snow when

analyzing the *justness* or the *compassion* of a morally upstanding person: if he could give

24. Craig, 181.
25. Craig, 178.

a scientific account of *justness* he would be giving into naturalism, which he has already concluded cannot account for objective moral values! To do so would only prove the naturalist's case. Thus it seems that, in the case of moral properties, his anti-metaphysical approach to analyzing property-talk outside of that linguistic framework has no legs. His claim that "Moral values seem to exist as properties of person" cannot be reconciled and gets us nowhere in understanding the claim in premise (2). We have no moral ontology, yet.

Without any idea of what Craig means by moral values and duties, his moral realism is incoherent. How do we know which moral statements are true? Craig seems to adhere to a correspondence theory of truth when he makes the following claim about the utterance that 'Sherri loves chocolate': "When we say that [Sherri loves chocolate], we speak truly just in case Sherrie loves chocolate, but we speak falsely if she does not."[26] Fair enough, so we should be able to similarly analyze the truth conditions for the following statement from *Reasonable Faith*: "Most of us recognize that sexual abuse of another person is wrong."[27] Thus, we speak truly when we say that sexual abuse of another person is wrong just in case sexual abuse is wrong. But what does it mean for something to be objectively wrong? Wrongness cannot be a property of sexual abuse, so what is it that the *wrongness* predicated in this statement corresponds to? What does it mean to say something *is wrong*? Thus far in his argument, Craig is silent on this question, and his nominalist moral realism is incoherent.

---

26. Craig, "Anti-Realism and Truth," Reasonablefaith.org.
27. Craig, *Reasonable Faith,* 181.

My second question seeks to scrutinize the defense of premise (2) by asking, what exactly is a moral perception in moral experience? Craig relies solely on moral experience to warrant the belief in a "realm of objective moral values and duties,"[28] but he offers almost no explanation of what a moral perception or experience consists in. Much of his talk of this moral perception is tied up with the language of sensory perception, specifically sight: "People who fail *to see* this are just morally handicapped, and there is no reason to allow their *impaired vision* to call into question what we *see* clearly."[29] But in his discussion of the views of philosopher William Sorley, Craig assures us that, "Now obviously Sorley does not mean we perceive value with our five senses in the way we do physical objects. We discern value in some *non-empirical way*…[.]"[30] This alleged "non-empirical" mode of perception is exceedingly vague, and our lack of a definition of moral values and duties leaves us confused about what the object of this mode of perception is even supposed to be. Physical objects populate the physical realm that we perceive with our five sense, but it is entirely unclear what exactly it is that populates this distinct "moral realm." To make matters worse, Craig expects us to readily accept as self-evident that our moral perceptions grant us knowledge of an objective realm, not merely subjective sentiments.

I have shown up to this point that without defining what exactly objective moral values and duties are, Craig has left his second premise unintelligible and the defense of that premise unsalvageable. In light of this, he has given no good reason to believe his argument sound. I will now show that his nominalist metaphysics requires a moral

---

28. Craig, 179.
29. Craig, 181 (emphasis added).
30. Craig, 104 (emphasis added).

ontology that traps his argument in triviality and circularity; it is this nominalist

metaphysics that forces him, for the sake of the argument, to fall back on unanalyzed,

vague colloquial notions of "moral experience." Despite the painful shortcomings of his

argument and its defense, Craig insists that objective moral values and duties exist, and

barring an objection to premise (1), he concludes that God exists, but that "in defending

the two premises, we have not committed ourselves to any particular account of the

relationship between God and moral values or duties."[31] His answer to this relationship is

an attempt both to circumvent the Euthyphro Dilemma and to deny the possibility that

premise (1) could be true if God exists while objective moral values and duties do not. He

offers a variation of a divine command theory of ethics.

Craig contends that the moral virtues consist in God's essential nature.[32] "God's

character is definitive of moral goodness; it serves as the paradigm of moral goodness."[33]

Furthermore, our moral duties are simply God's willful commands that follow necessarily

from his essential nature. "Thus, the morally good/bad is determined by reference to

God's nature; the morally right/wrong is determined by reference to his will."[34] These

definitions of the moral virtues and duties amount to saying that the good = God, and this

is necessitated by Craig's nominalism; he has grounded "morality" in the very existence

of a concrete, particular Being, namely, the fully-charactered individuator called "God,"

---

31. Craig, 181.
32. Understanding exactly what Craig means here by "essential nature" is tricky business. "God is essentially compassionate, fair, kind, impartial, and so forth,…" *Reasonable Faith*,182. Recall that under austere nominalism, all that exists are *simple* concrete particulars, which have "no internal differentiation of properties," Smith, 336. But to call God compassionate, fair, kind, impartial, this is certainly differentiation. Essentialism and austere nominalism appear at first approximation to be incompatible.
33. Craig, 182.
34. Craig, 182.

thus avoiding recourse to any abstract objects.[35] This, he thinks, successfully offers a third alternative to the Euthyphro Dilemma, rendering it a false dilemma, and guarantees by definition that if God does not exist, then objective moral values and duties do not exist. This ontology might also begin to clear up the question of the truth conditions of moral statements: God's very existence is what makes these statements objectively true or false.

Yet, surely, this identity statement that the good and the obligatory *just are* God allows us to replace Craig's original moral argument with the following:

(4) If God does not exist, then God does not exist.

(5) God does exist.

(6) Therefore, God exists.

Clearly, this is equivalent to the original formulation now that it is understood what Craig means by objective moral values and duties. And we can see why my analyses of the contents of premise (2) and of his defense thereof came up so empty-handed without this ontology. Offer this ontology while defending the premises, and there are two effects: the first premise becomes an utterly trivial claim, and the conclusion shows itself to be a restatement of premise (2), which renders the argument circular. Withhold this ontology, and we are forced to struggle with vague notions of moral values and duties, of moral perceptions, of moral experience, and no way to make sense of it all. The colloquial senses in which these notions are haphazardly utilized in *Reasonable Faith* do not stand up to scrutiny, and Craig's nominalist metaphysics

---

35. That is to say, what is considered "good" is only nominally so. When we say, "x is good," what we really mean to say is, "x comports with God's essential nature."

guarantee that they will not. Thus, his moral argument for God's existence fails and the Euthyphro Dilemma remains standing.

Conclusion

My criticism of Craig's moral argument for God's existence is an attempt to shine light on some extremely problematic ways in which he thinks about morality. It seems that Craig is desperate enough to preserve his primary commitments to Christianity that he is willing to adopt untenable metaphysics in an attempt to answer Plato's devastating Euthyphro Dilemma. He is seemingly convinced that objectivity in our ethics can only be achieved by driving a wedge between human beings and moral truth; God, he thinks, is surely required to ground the objectivity of these truths. Moreover, a Someone or Something is needed to impose a meaningful sense of duty or obligation upon us, and that One is God. If our aim is an honest inquiry into what might constitute a good life, then anti-naturalist attitudes and presuppositions like Craig's only stunt that inquiry. Arguing in the above manner, and insisting that God is necessary for an objective ethic, only slows us down. In Chapter 2, I will explore the ethical thought of philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, whom I believe offers a much more suitable framework than that of Craig's.

CHAPTER II: THE PEIRCEAN ALTERNATIVE

In juxtaposition to the ethical and metaphysical frameworks of William Lane Craig outlined and critiqued in the previous chapter, on offer in this chapter is the systematic thought of scientist, logician, semiotician, and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Peirce stands today as one of America's foremost geniuses. His proficiency in mathematical logic was unparalleled, he practiced an architectonic approach that was one of the last attempts at large-scale philosophical systemiticity in the West, and his triadic theory of signs was unique from European semiology. But Peirce is most widely known in academic circles as the father of American Pragmatism. This distinctly American philosophy, certainly undergoing evolutions over the course of the late-19th and 20th centuries, found its inception in Peirce's January 1878 essay entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in which he offered a logical maxim, the *Pragmatic* maxim, as a tool for rendering confused conceptions more clear and distinct: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."[36]

What followed from this maxim was a wealth of concepts, classifications, and methods that would be fleshed out over the remainder of Peirce's career. Oddly enough, as Peirce diverted more and more of his time from scientific to philosophical endeavors, he was pessimistic about the possibility of a philosophical treatment of ethics; that is, for Peirce, ethics was in no shape to be considered a normative *science* to any degree and

---

1. Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," 1878, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 132.

was to live solely within the realm of practical affairs. This attitude in Peirce's thought, however, began to shift around 1899, and ethics would be firmly cemented as one of Peirce's three Normative Sciences in the presentation of his 1903 Lectures, in which Pragmatism (newly minted as *pragmaticism*) as a logical maxim was analyzed and argued for over the course of seven talks at Harvard University.[37]

It is my intention here to give a sketch of Peirce's ethical thought as a possible alternative to the confused metaphysics and ethics to be found in William Lane Craig's philosophy. These two thinkers juxtapose in several interesting ways: (1) Peirce was a vicious enemy of nominalism, blaming it for most of the woes of contemporary philosophy, and thought that, indeed, pragmatism followed from the Scotistic realism that he was committed to;[38] (2) Peirce earnestly investigates the legitimacy of the good/bad distinction, rather than assuming it as moral knowledge immediately apprehended through "moral perception;" and (3) Peirce does not proceed in ethics from questions like, what are the rules? And *Who* makes them? But by asking, what is it that I want? Is there something that I *should* want? Toward what should my deliberate action ultimately be aimed? What am I prepared to do in the service of some ultimate aim?

Given the immense scope and systematic nature of Peirce's work, for my purposes I will seek to keep this sketch as general as possible. Initially, I will briefly explore Peirce's universal categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness so as to

---

2. The Peirce Edition Project, ed., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 527 note 5.

3. For an examination of this connection between realism and pragmatism, see: Edward C. Moore, "The Scholastic Realism of C S Peirce," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 12 (March 1, 1952): 406-17, http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL100182 2&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

prepare us for a deeper understanding of the classifications of the normative sciences. Next, I will define *normative science* as Peirce conceives it, and explain the division of and the relations between the three normative sciences of Esthetics, Pure Ethics, and Logic. From there, a closer investigation into Peirce's esthetics is in order to grasp just what constitutes the ultimate ideal of deliberate action, which is the final object of ethics. Finally, I will conclude with the matters of practical ethics (or *practics*), of habit-formation and self-criticism.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, the science of appearances, is first in Peirce's three grand divisions of philosophy, namely, Phenomenology, Normative Science, and Metaphysics. Phenomenology aims to describe the most fundamental features of "whatever is *experienced* or might conceivably be experienced or become an object of study in any way direct or indirect."[39] An exhaustive, or something approximating exhaustive, description of phenomena qua phenomena lays the foundation for Peirce's justification of the good/bad duality assumed by the normative sciences. Phenomenological investigation requires that we "open our mental eyes and look well at the phenomenon and say what are the characteristics that are never wanting in it…[.]"[40] As a result of his inquiries, Peirce concluded that there were in fact three *universal categories* which are every one present to some extent in all phenomena: the categories of *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*.

---

4. Charles Sanders Peirce, "On Phenomenology," 1903, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 143.

5. Peirce, "On Phenomenology," *The Essential Vol. 2,* 147.

Firstness is what Peirce refers to as *presentness* or *present presentness*, "just what it is regardless of the absent, regardless of past and future."[41] When we consider a phenomenon in its Firstness, we have it present before our minds without reference, without representation, isolated, undifferentiated, as "nothing but a simple positive character."[42] Firstness is not an abstraction; it is immediate. Important to note is the psychical manifestation of Firstness as feeling, a Quality of Feeling, as Peirce puts it. The very instant we open our mental eyes, all phenomena simply appear as they are; Firstness is universal and irreducible. That a phenomenon appears at all is Firstness.

Secondness is that aspect of *struggle*, of action and reaction, of resistance that is forced upon us by every phenomenon. It is the oppositional element to every*thing* we experience, an establishment of particularity; that is, Secondness is that element of phenomena in virtue of which the ego is differentiated from the non-ego, that which grants an "otherness" to phenomena. Secondness is disclosed to us in the starkest of terms when one is surprised, when one holds an expectation and turns out to be wrong: this error in judgement inheres in an "I," and that which this "I" misjudged and was surprised by must be something differentiated from the "I." "The sense of shock is as much a sense of resisting as of being acted upon."[43] Thus, the oppositional element in what I experience comes to light because of my error and ignorance.

Thirdness, Peirce's final universal category, "is precisely that whose reality is denied by nominalism."[44] Thirdness is *law, representation, habit*, a third between a second and a first. To commit to Thirdness is to commit to connections between

6. Peirce, 150.
7. Peirce, 150.
8. Peirce, 151.
9. Peirce, 157.

phenomena, to the reality of general terms beyond a nominal convenience, to the position

that our world cannot be reduced to unrelated particulars and mechanical action.

Thirdness in phenomena is that which allows us to genuinely sort items of experience

into kinds, whereas nominalists claim only loose resemblances between particulars, and

thus is what allows us to make predictions about our experience. In short, for Peirce,

when we sort the items of our experience into kinds, these are not kinds in name only;

things really *are* related and connected, and these connections are irreducible Thirds.[45]

For Peirce, the trichotomic division of the universal categories is no trivial fact.

Trichotomies abound in Peirce's systematic thought, a direct reflection of the

fundamental nature of the categories: the three grand divisions of philosophy; the

trichotomic division of the general sign in his semiotics; the three modes of evolution of

tychasm, *ananchasm*, and *agapasm*; the three modes of inference; the three universes of

possibility, actuality, and connection; and on and on. Of most interest here is the triadic

classification of the Normative Sciences which correspond to *Firstness* (Esthetics),

Secondness (Ethics), and *Thirdness* (Logic). This brief overview of Peirce's

phenomenology will prove helpful in understanding the purview and aims of these

sciences as they study the relations of phenomena to ends.

The Three Normative Sciences

---

10. An excellent example from Peirce that illustrates the irreducibility of *Thirdness* comes from his 1903 lecture, "The Categories Defended." Try to reduce the proposition "*A* gives *B* to *C*" to some set of dyadic, mechanical interactions: perhaps "*A* lets *B* go" and "*C* picks up *B*." We could furnish any number of attempts that will all fail to express the obviously triadic relation in the original proposition to be reduced, namely, *the transfer of ownership*. This is a Third.

For Peirce, Normative Science "investigates the universal and necessary laws of the relation of Phenomena to *Ends,* that is, perhaps, to Truth, Right, and Beauty."[46] Esthetics considers ends as they embody qualities of feeling, their *Firstness*; Ethics considers ends as they lie in action, their *Secondness*; and Logic considers ends insofar as they represent something, their *Thirdness*. These are positive, theoretical sciences, investigating "the theory of the distinction between what is good and what is bad," sciences that are "founded upon certain *matters of fact* that are open to the daily and hourly observation of every man and woman."[47] These sciences suppose a goodness and badness in thought, action, and feeling, and these dualisms relate in an interesting way.

Recall the Pragmatic Maxim quoted above, and follow Peirce in his application of pragmatism to *thought*, broadly speaking. Pragmatism would have it that "what we think is to be interpreted in terms of what we are prepared to do…[.]"[48] Consider, then, Logic as normative science: Logic is the science of goodness and badness in thought, what we *ought* to think being that which tends toward Truth. But if thought is interpreted in terms of what we are prepared to *do*, then Logic "must be an application of the doctrine of what we deliberately choose to do, which is Ethics."[49] Thus, logical goodness is actually a

---

11. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," 1903, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 197.

12. Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 147 (emphasis added).The establishment of the Normative Sciences in fact is an obvious challenge of the fact-value distinction; the distinction, for Peirce, is a matter of *degree*, not *kind*.

13. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Maxim of Pragmatism," 1903, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 142. Of course, not *everything* that is or could conceivably be will, in some analysis of a normative science, be subsumed under "good" or "bad."

14. Peirce, "The Maxim of Pragmatism," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 142.

species of moral goodness; we might say that how we ought to think is fundamentally

parasitic on how we ought to act.

Further, for Peirce, a doctrine of Ethics seeks to determine the ends to which

deliberate action ought to conform, to determine fit ideals of conduct to be deliberately

(or reasonably) adopted. For Peirce, the final object of our ethics is a final or *ultimate*

ideal, that toward which all of our conduct is to be eventually directed, which brings all

of our ideals into harmony with each other. Ethics so conceived, then, presupposes "some

ideal state of things which regardless of how it should be brought about and

independently of any ulterior reason whatsoever, is held to be good or fine."[50] This ideal

state of things, suggesting itself in itself, is *admirable*; but to call anything admirable is to

make an esthetic judgement predicating esthetic goodness. Thus, if we want to know

what is morally good or bad, we need a thoroughgoing study of Esthetics, which

"determine[s] by analysis what it is that one ought deliberately to admire *per se* in itself

regardless of what it may lead to and regardless of its bearings upon human conduct."[51]

Esthetics and the Ultimate Ideal of Conduct

Esthetics studies "objects considered simply in their presentation."[52] In esthetics,

then, we are studying objects in their Firstness, studying them inasmuch as they impart

some Quality of Feeling. What does it mean, then, to say that an object is esthetically

good? For Peirce, "to be esthetically good" is to "have a multitude of parts so related to

one another as to impart a positive simple immediate quality to their totality; and

---

15. Peirce, 142.
16. Peirce, 142. This dependency on the admirable *per se* is what may distinguish Pure
Ethics, as a theoretical science, from practical ethics (what Peirce calls *practics)*.
17. Peirce, 143.

whatever does this is, in so far, esthetically good, no matter what the particular quality of the total may be."[53] This relation between the multitude of parts of an object is *consistency*; consistency is essentially how all esthetic qualities are constituted, pleasurable or otherwise. If the parts of an object fit together in such a *harmonious* way, lets say, this alone makes it esthetically good.[54]

How is it, then, that we experience esthetic goodness? By *feeling* that simple positive quality that consistency imparts. Now, consistency is part and parcel of reasonableness, so when one becomes aware of the esthetic quality in, say, an appreciation for a work of art, one is experiencing "a sort of intellectual sympathy, a sense that here is a feeling that one can comprehend, a reasonable feeling."[55] That is, in terms of the categories, we experience the Firstness (feeling) of Thirdness (representation). The consistency relation between parts of an object is a Third, and the quality of feeling that reveals this to us is a First.

With this understanding of esthetic goodness in mind, what then does Esthetics as normative science have to say about the admirable *per se*, which constitutes the ultimate ideal of conduct in Ethics? We are in search of that which "*reasonably recommends itself in itself* aside from any ulterior consideration"[56] For Peirce, the only thing that meets this criteria is Reason itself and the development thereof. By Reason, Peirce does not mean

18. Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 201.
19. Note well the indispensability of consistency to all three normative sciences; obvious enough in logic, but think also of how we react to *hypocrisy*. We judge inconsistencies between thought, speech and action in the other as unethical, and our judgement is commonly attended by feelings of disgust.
20. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Seven Systems of Metaphysics," 1903, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 190.
21. Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 201.

"man's faculty which is so called from its embodying in some measure Reason…[.]"[57] Reason, here, is the General of generals to which we have committed ourselves to in our recognition of Thirdness in the world, of real connection, of habit and law. Reason is that which actually governs individual events (Seconds), it is *the* operation of the evolution and development of the entire universe from chaotic to orderly, including human beings. Thus, if the most "satisfying ideal of the admirable [is] the development of Reason so understood," the development of which "consists, you will observe, in embodiment, that is, in manifestation," then "the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is 'up to us' to do so."[58] We are to be agents of the embodiment of Reason.

Undoubtedly, the embodiment of Reason, that is, *Concrete Reasonableness*, as the ultimate ideal of conduct seems at first approximation rather divorced from common notions of the subject matter of ethics. For the development of Concrete Reasonableness is an evolutionary process involving more than just moral agents; the entire Cosmos, including and especially ideas, is a possible vessel of Reason. For true justice to be done to the full scope of this idea, rigorously thorough treatments of many other cogs in the Peircean machine would be required: Scotistic metaphysical realism, Pragmaticism, Thirdness, tychastic/anancastic/agapastic evolution, continuity, semiotics, and much more. But with the help of Peirce's essays "Evolutionary Love" and "The Doctrine of

---

22. Charles Sanders Peirce, "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?," 1903, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 254.
23. Peirce, "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 255.

Chances," we can bring this discussion of Concrete Reasonableness down to the level of human affairs.

Peirce's work describes evolutionary (or creative) love as the agent of Concrete Reasonableness. When we speak of ideas, evolutionary love is that process by which ideas are individually developed to be more general in themselves, yet at the same time brought into harmony or *consistency* with each other: "The movement of love is circular, at one and the same impulse projecting creations into independency and drawing them into harmony."[59] But what, for Peirce, is the analogue of this process in the relations between human beings? It is "the simple formula we call the Golden Rule," says Peirce, which pronounces, "Sacrifice your own perfections to the perfectionment of your neighbor."[60] "Love," he says, "is not directed to abstractions but to persons…. 'Our neighbor,' we remember, is one whom we live near, not locally perhaps, but in life and feeling."[61] James Feibleman writes that for Peirce, "The command to love one's neighbor more than one's self…, makes love the over-all deontological requirement."[62] Love, self-sacrifice, community, are ideas that suggest that some sense of *sympathy* may also be indispensable to the agent of Concrete Reasonableness; indeed, Peirce put great stock in a sentimental habit of feeling. He was a proponent of what he referred to as *sentimentalism*,

24. Charles Sanders Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," 1893, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 353.

25. Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," in *The Essential Vol. 1*, 353.

26. Peirce, 354.

27. James Feibleman, "A Systematic Presentation of Peirce's Ethics," *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* 53 (January 1, 1943): 109, http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL1004489&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

"the doctrine that great respect should be paid to the natural judgements of the sensible heart."[63]

To be agents of Concrete Reasonableness then is, at one level, to love others, to put the flourishing of others before our own. And we can bolster this Golden Rule by ensuring its infinite scope through work in "The Doctrine of Chances." There, Peirce analyzes the theory of probability, which for Peirce is "simply the *science of logic* quantitatively treated."[64] Peirce adheres to a relative frequency interpretation of probability: "An individual inference must be either true or false, and can show no effect of probability; and, therefore, in reference to a single case considered in itself, probability can have no meaning."[65] Peirce also claims, uncontroversially, "All human affairs rest upon probabilities, and the same thing is true everywhere."[66] Taken together, what do these two propositions suggest that is of import to ethics?

If all human affairs are to be reasoned through probabilistically and isolated events cannot admit of any probability, then "logicality inexorably requires that our interests shall *not* be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community."[67] For Peirce, one cannot be logical if one considers only one's self, an isolated, single case, in one's inferences; *everyone* must be accounted for. Moreover,

---

28. Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," in *The Essential Vol. 1*, 356.Much more can be said about the role of sympathy in Peirce's thought. His synechistic doctrine of continuity and his interesting approach to a theory of mind can be seen to provide grounds for sympathy. See Vincent Michael Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State Univerersity of New York Press, 2006), 99-104, for a sketch of this approach.

29. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Doctrine of Chances," 1878, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 144 (emphasis added).

30. Peirce, "The Doctrine of Chances," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 147.

31. Peirce, 149.

32. Peirce, 149.

consider the following: under Peirce's theory of probability, the real fact to which the truth of the implication "if A, then B" corresponds must be "that *whenever* such an event as A happens such an event as B happens."[68] This "*whenever*" condition requires that the truth of a proposition lies in an unlimited future, considering probability as "a kind of inference which is repeated indefinitely."[69] Our idea of community must be pushed even further then, to the conception of an *unlimited community*: "This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds."[70]

The doctrine of Logic depends on the doctrine of Ethics, which itself depends on the Esthetic admirable ideal. The development of Reason in its progressive embodiment is the truly admirable *per se*, suggesting itself without ulterior reason. This is the ultimate ideal, an ideal that can be pursued indefinitely, as Reason by its very nature "never can have been completely perfected."[71] To be agents of Concrete Reasonableness, we must love our neighbors as ourselves; even Logic demands that this be so, and that we embrace an *unlimited community* of fellow agents. Peirce is unequivocal: "He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is, as it seems to me, illogical in all his

---

33. Peirce, 147.
34. Peirce, 147. No doubt, pushing truth conditions into the future runs some inductive risks. It is well outside of my scope to resolve the issue here, but I can point to the work of Cheryl Misak and her helpful interpretations of Peirce's conception of truth as a point of departure. Chapter 2 in her *Truth, Politics, and Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* is a helpful gloss that rightly reflects the importance of the constitution of a true belief as lying in its ability to forever withstand doubt and counterargument.
35. Peirce, 149
36. Peirce, "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?" in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 255.

inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the *social principle*."[72] So much for Pure

Ethics, and with reference to the ultimate ideal of conduct thus established, the realm of

Practics, of habit formation and self-criticism, can be more fruitfully expounded.

Practics

Deliberate conduct always has an intended aim or an end, some of which are

informed by ideals; these ideals constitute one's most basic beliefs about how one ought

to live. And for Peirce, it is clear that "every man has certain ideals of the general

description of conduct that befits a rational animal in his particular station in life, what

most accords with his total nature and relations."[73] Our ideals meet us where we are, as it

were; they are preferably formed in some accordance with how we are situated

biologically, sociologically, and historically. In one sense, then, ethics must be pluralistic

and sensitive to context, not just a matter of forcing the complexities of human relations

and interactions into the boxes eternal, absolute rules: "In deciding any special question

of conduct it is often quite right to allow weight to different conflicting considerations

and calculate their result."[74] And how does one come to adopt these ideals?

There are three orders of consideration: (1) One contemplates the esthetic quality

of certain kinds of ideals, adopting those that seem good or fine; (2) One attempts to

make one's collection of ideals consistent or harmonious with one another; and (3) One

predicts what would be the esthetic quality of the consequences of acting on these ideals.

Clearly there is a heavy reliance on our esthetic sensibilities. From these ideals one then

---

37. Peirce, "The Doctrine of Chances," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 149 (emphasis added).
This is one of Peirce's more poetic moments stylistically, but the import is clear: inclusivity is
indispensable for a community of inquirers.
38. Peirce, "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?" in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 245.
39. Peirce, 253.

derives rules of conduct; reflection on these rules of conduct instills a *disposition*, "so that what he naturally inclines to do becomes modified."[75] That is, we will be disposed to act in predictable ways in the future which are consistent with these rules. Disposition or habit formation, a completely natural phenomenon, is precisely what William Lane Craig's metaphysics needs to make sense of moral property-talk, but it is, too, precisely what he has no recourse to by denying naturalism. For this is all that we need say to analyze the predication of "compassionate" to an agent: this is simply a particular disposition to act a certain way under a certain set of circumstances. Peirce says that our dispositions will form determinations in our conduct, "by which I mean a really efficient agency, such that if one knows what its special character is, one can *forecast* the man's conduct on the special occasion."[76]

Simply put, in practics we are in the business of forming habits of conduct that are consistent with our ideals; and if one claims to know *who I am*, then all this really means is that one is able to predict with some amount of success *what I will do*. The importance of habit cannot be understated. The habits of conscious moral agents formed in accordance with an ideal are the final realization of that ideal qua sign; that is, in following the pragmatic maxim, the whole of our conception of an ideal is constituted by the conceivable practical effects this conception may have in experience. Thus, the determination of conduct provided by a habit is that practical effect; an ideal *just is* what it does, in this case *through us*. Recall that habit is a form of Thirdness, so when we develop these would-be determinations in our conduct, we in a sense *embody* Reason.

---

40. Peirce, 246.
41. Peirce, 246.

Reasonableness itself is made Concrete in actual existents. We are truly efficient agents of evolutionary love in virtue of our habits.

Of utmost importance for this picture of habituation towards ideals is our ability as agents to criticize our own conduct. For Peirce, there are three levels of self-criticism that ought to occur following any circumstance before which we formed a resolution of how we intended to act (a resolution informed by our dispositions). For example, I may know that an unruly, rather belligerent family member will be attending a reunion, and I form the resolution beforehand that I will not bring up any possibly triggering topics during conversation with him, such as religion or politics, to avoid stoking unnecessary conflict. I follow through with my intentions, and the reunion goes on without a hitch. In later reflection, I ask myself three questions, the answers to which will be accompanied by either an esthetically satisfying or unsatisfying quality of feeling:

(1) Did my conduct accord with my resolution?

(2) Did my conduct accord with my general intentions?

(3) Did my conduct accord with the ideals befitting someone like me?

Feelings of satisfaction will move us up the ladder of abstraction from resolution, to general intentions, to ideals, and will help encourage similar behavior in the future; thus, habituation. Feelings of dissatisfaction at any level of criticism will be just as helpful: "Whether the man is satisfied with himself or dissatisfied, his nature will absorb the lesson like a sponge; and the next time he will tend to do better than he did before."[77] We have in place, then, the four main elements of moral conduct, as conceived by Peirce: (1) A general standard mentally conceived beforehand; (2) the efficient agency in the

---

42. Peirce, 248.

inward nature (dispositions and determinations); (3) the act; and (4) comparison of the act with the standard. Now, the family reunion example is of course a fairly algorithmic analysis of deliberate conduct, and we obviously will not form resolutions before every single affair; nonetheless, our dispositions will play a primary role in determining how we will conduct ourselves. *Habits are the key factor*.

The highest level of analysis, though, is when we take a look at our ideals themselves: "In addition to these three self-criticisms of single series of actions, a man will from time to time review his *ideals*. This process is not a job that man sits down to do and have done with. The experience of life is continually contributing instances more or less illuminative."[78] The three self-criticisms of single-series action have as their final standard our ideals; when criticizing our ideals, the final standard is the ultimate ideal, Concrete Reasonableness. So we see that the work of Esthetics and Pure Ethics discovers that which all our conduct must aim at, that which all our ideals must be consistent with. Bringing our ideals and our conduct into harmony with Reason is a life-long endeavor. Before concluding this chapter, I will offer a few words on the idea of *objectivity* in our moral framework.

"Objective" Morality

The second premise of Dr. Craig's moral argument for God's existence claimed the existence of *objective* moral values and duties. We saw the difficulty in ascertaining, before concluding that God exists, just what it is that Craig means by "moral values and duties" given his nominalist metaphysics. But what exactly is the "objective" qualifier signifying when we talk about moral realism? For Craig, objectivity in our morality

---

43. Peirce, 248.

seems to at least partly consist in this: morality is objective if the truth of moral propositions is not relative to any subjective preferences or sentiments. Craig wants to be able to say that something is right or wrong, good or evil, *independently* of whether or not any human being thinks it so, and this he believes can only be achieved by grounding the truth of moral propositions in a spaceless, timeless, personal Being, to wit, God.[79] What can be said about objectivity and the moral philosophy of C.S. Peirce outlined above? I contend that there are at least two important ways that Peirce secures objectivity which will rely in part on Helen Longino's analysis of objectivity as it pertains to the sciences.

First, Peirce establishes a kind of "moral realm" in the *facts* of Esthetics, in the admirability of Reason which suggests itself without any ulterior consideration. For Peirce, these are facts about the world that certainly do not depend upon any one of us for their reality. There's no doubt that Peirce himself believed the foundations of his ethics to be objective in Craig's sense: on Normative Science, he says that "it is no more [aided] by psychology than by any other special science," and that "when it comes to a particular case, to urge that anything is sound and good logically, morally, or esthetically, for no better reason than that men have a natural tendency to think so…, is as pernicious a fallacy as ever was."[80] This grounding in *natural* facts affords a much more meaningful employment of the term "realm" than Craig can ever claim with his reliance upon the transcendent.

In her highly acclaimed work *Science as Social Knowledge*, Helen Longino offers an answer to those who are concerned that scientific method is susceptible to individual

---

44. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 173. As an aside, from Peirce's "The Seven System of Metaphysics": "I do not approve of mixing up Religion and Philosophy," *Essential Vol. 2*, 185.
45. Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 198.

biases and prejudices; objectivity is here considered as freedom from said individual bias and prejudice. To put it crudely, for Longino, if we recalibrate our thinking to look at science as *practice*, a practice that is as a matter of fact social in nature, we can then view objectivity as coming in degrees. The social practice of science involves intense intersubjective scrutiny, criticism, replication, and revision amongst members of scientific communities. If one is concerned that the methods of science may be obscured by any one person's idiosyncrasies, then the more individual and collective perspectives that are accounted for in intersubjective criticism, the more effectively individual biases are challenged, and *the higher the degree of objectivity*.

This emphasis on inclusivity in inquiry is harmonious with Peircean thought in more ways than one, but I believe that Longino's sense of objectivity can help further distinguish Peirce from Craig in the ethical dimension. Keep in mind three important principles in Peirce's philosophy: (1) As human beings, the self is not essentially insular and isolated, but *communicative;* (2) we cannot be logical (nor ethical) without considering ourselves as part of an absolutely inclusive, unlimited community; and (3) continuous self-criticism is paramount to living a good life. It seems obvious from these ideas that, for Peirce, we really need each other for an ethical life to even be possible. Participation in the unlimited community is what uncovers one's own idiosyncratic approach to the world, and once uncovered this approach can then be corrected. As it is in any inquiry, we inch ever closer to the Truth in the moral realm as more and more perspectives are accounted for; this is what Pragmaticism teaches. The mission of forming better and better ideals that are consistent with Concrete Reasonableness (a life-

long journey) is a communal one. This is clearly consonant with Longino's approach to securing objectivity in the sciences.

Can the same be said for Craig? Absolutely not, for he merely takes as given that everyone "apprehends" the absolute, immutable, mind-independently objective rules that are grounded in a supernatural Being's essence and divine dictates. We all just *see*, and recall that for Craig, those of us "who fail to see this are just morally handicapped, and there is no reason to allow their impaired vision to call into question what we see clearly."[81] It seems that for Craig, inclusivity in ethics is exactly what we are trying to *avoid* when securing objectivity; we do not need a community of inquirers, we simply cannot be wrong. God has made His commands, and to live a good life is to follow those eternal commands you most assuredly "apprehend" *immediately*.

---

46. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 181.

CHAPTER III: AN INTERPRETIVE SCHEME FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE

TWELVE STEPS

In Chapter One, I sought to expose the flaws in William Lane Craig's moral argument for God's existence; these flaws betray the ways in which several of his prior commitments have informed a general view of how ethical inquiry is to be conducted and what a successful ethical theory must look like. As we saw, Craig's moral argument for God's existence demanded suppositions about morality that unjustifiably stunt inquiry, including the idea that a transcendent Judge is required to bestow mind-independent (*human* minds, that is) moral laws and to hold us to our obligations. He was unable to overcome the Euthyphro Dilemma by adopting nominalist metaphysics and denying naturalist accounts of morality, and he left himself no way to account for the truth of moral statements. Chapter Two is a general exposition of what I believe serves as a viable alternative to the Craigean ethical project: the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce. In Peirce we can be naturalists, we can be realists about our ideals, we have an ethic of virtue rather than law, and a dependence upon community to attain moral knowledge.

Now, the question of whether or not Peirce has given us the final word on morality is one which must be answered outside of the scope of this project. The juxtaposition of these two thinkers in the moral arena shows the theoretical advantages of the Peircean perspective over Craig's, and this has been my sole intention. What remains for this chapter is a philosophical exercise in Peirce's ethics and Peircean philosophy in

general which might inspire us to take Peirce seriously. In what follows, I will utilize

Peirce's normative thought to render an interpretation of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics

Anonymous (A.A.).[82]

The A.A. program, as it appears in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (affectionally referred

to by A.A. members as the "Big Book") and the explicative essays in *Twelve Steps and*

Twelve Traditions, has shown itself to be an effective treatment of alcoholism.[83] This

program insists that alcoholic drinking is symptomatic of a deeper inability to deal

effectively with human frailties like resentment, self-centered fear, guilt, shame, and so

on; these emotions and reactions are *triggers* of a sort for alcoholic drinking. For those

seeking relief from alcoholism, then, A.A. lays out a path towards a "*personality change*

sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism."[84] Alcoholics Anonymous is in a

major sense a character-building program. However, A.A. has garnered plenty of

criticism over its eighty-five year history, much of which seems to center on its purported

spiritual nature. So much of the language throughout A.A. literature, practice, and culture

is God-laden, with talk of Higher Powers, the power of prayer and spiritual experiences.

Onlookers may see the success of A.A. as crying out for explanation, but many

members hold steadfastly that God is solely responsible for their abstinence. Insofar as

personal recovery is concerned, this may be a sufficient explanation for any one A.A.

---

1. The Twelve Steps have been appropriated by dozens more Anonymous groups which specifically address narcotics addiction, codependency issues, compulsive gambling, overeating, and much more.

2. For a look at a recent study on the success rate of the A.A. program, see Dan Wagener, ed., "What Is the Success Rate of A.A.?," Americanaddictioncenters.org, last modified May 19, 2020, https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/12-step/whats-the-success-rate-of-A.A..

3. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism* (New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), 567 (emphasis added).

member and is consonant with a more straightforward reading of the Twelve Steps. But might there be an alternative interpretation of the goings-on in A.A. that accounts for most if not all of its recoveries? Certainly, many alcoholics remake their lives while claiming divine intervention from very different, incompatible gods, or without belief in any god at all; how might this be so?[85] The idiosyncrasies in the spiritual ideas and practices of individual A.A.s, so many lived experiences, seem to get lost if we terminate an analysis at the ever-ambiguous "God." And it is clear that the philosophy of William Lane Craig, which I critiqued in Chapter One, can be of no help here; interpreting the success of Alcoholics Anonymous through a particular theological lens such as Craig's *just is* the problem we are trying to answer.

As a matter of philosophical investigation my interests here lie in the *concepts* of the A.A. program; these concepts shape the ways in which members come to understand the nature of one's disease, of one's tumultuous past, the idea of a "higher power," community, virtue, service, and much else that is indispensable to staying sober. I contend that Peircean philosophy provides an interpretation of the conceptual framework furnished by the Twelve Steps that can help us understand why this framework seems to engender the long-term sobriety one finds in A.A. meetings. We can interpret the Twelve Steps as a kind of *translation* of Peircean concepts into a "language of recovery," an adaptation of Peirce specifically to address the problem of alcoholism. My aim is to present the A.A. steps and principles as an unwitting adaptation of Peirce's framework of the normative sciences, of the ultimate ideal, of community, of practical ethics as

---

4. For a collection of personal accounts of recovery from atheist and agnostic A.A. members, see *One Big Tent: Atheist and Agnostic A.A. Members Share Their Experience, Strength and Hope* (New York, NY: A.A. Grapevine, 2018)

habituation and self-criticism. The ability to account for the concrete success of a moral phenomenon like A.A., which the Craigean philosophy only confuses, may bolster our confidence in that Peirce was on to something — at the very least, to demonstrate some of his thought's utility.

Step 1: We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and that our lives had become unmanageable.

A.A.'s conception of alcoholism describes the illness as being twofold, both mental and physical: (1) alcoholics are *mentally* obsessed with drinking, compelled so strongly that the next drink is an inevitability, and (2) they *physically* react to alcohol like an allergy of sorts, being that once any alcohol whatsoever is consumed, they crave more and more. The metaphysics of the mind aside, one can at least claim that this conception gets at the *powerlessness* over alcohol, that there is a vicious circle perpetuated by the physiological and psychological dependencies of the alcoholic. "The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process."[86]

These dependencies, which are construed as moral deficiencies or weaknesses of the will in the stigmatization of alcoholism, certainly go beyond self-control. For Peirce, then, they may not be considered for moral approval or disapproval *in themselves*: "There are mental operations which are as completely beyond our control as the growth of our hair. To approve or disapprove of *them* would be idle."[87] But in their demand to be

---

5. Bill W., *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2017), 22.

6. Peirce, "The Three Normative Sciences," in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 200.

satisfied, these dependencies motivate habitual negative behavior that lead to unmanageable chaos (legal trouble, bankruptcy, divorce, unemployment, isolation, medical problems), and the vicious circle ultimately shields the alcoholic from facing the root of their troubles: resentment, fear, guilt, shame, and all the rest. Now, an alcoholic that finds herself in an A.A. meeting admitting to her powerlessness and the unmanageability of her plight has more than likely acknowledged the havoc that she has wreaked in her own life and in the lives of those around her. In short, she has reached bottom, a necessary condition to effectively begin the A.A. recovery program.[88]

Peirce might say that part of what makes the unmanageable behavior and consequences that accompany alcoholism so jarring is the *inconsistency* between the ideals of conduct and the unfortunate habits in feeling, action and thought that the alcoholic forms and acts out over the course of their addiction. Dishonesty, thievery, rage, jealousy, fear, insecurity, self-centeredness, all the behaviors and emotions that are covered up by or motivated in the service of alcoholic drinking, these result in an excruciating tension with a good life that the alcoholic may even desperately desire to live but is physically and mentally compelled to betray. This inconsistency can be felt in the emotional depression of hitting bottom; having acknowledged the problematic of her drinking career in Step One, the alcoholic is forced to survey her destructive actions and unhealthy, flawed ways of thinking. Recall that inconsistency, hypocrisy, these are commonly attended by feelings of disgust.

Step Two: We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

7.Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 21.

The "insanity" that Alcoholics Anonymous believes to be characteristic of an alcoholic is defined in that popular folk sense of repeating the same actions over and over again while expecting different results. Of course, this idea is simpatico with Peirce's insistence on the importance of habits in constituting who we are: the alcoholic is "insane" in this sense due to the deeply engrained habits developed over the course of her drinking career. The viciously circular nature of the alcoholic's twofold condition, once it has sufficiently progressed, guarantees this insanity. Furthermore, in common A.A. experience, every attempt to moderate or completely curb one's drinking *on one's own* is to no avail, an abysmal failure.[89]

Of course, this is where the God business of A.A. begins, where the *spiritual* (though expressly not religious) aspect of the program makes its entrance by suggesting that a "Higher Power" must be appealed to. For the seemingly hopeless predicament described in Step One, buttressed by the insanity expressed in Step Two and the futility of self-help, naturally suggests that the alcoholic needs to look for help *outside of herself*. For many practitioners of the Twelve Steps, theirs were such cases that, so they believe, "probably no human power could have relieved [their] alcoholism."[90]

Now, what makes A.A. unique in this appeal is that members are free to choose any conception of a "Power greater than" themselves that satisfies them, God or otherwise, only requiring that it not be *oneself*. This freedom is what opened up Bill Wilson, one of the cofounders of A.A., to the idea of a "spiritual" solution to alcoholism; he was emphatically encouraged by a fellow drunkard, "*Why don't you choose your own*

---

8. For a list of the myriad methods alcoholics commonly try to moderate their drinking, see Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 31.
9. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 60.

conception of God?"[91] I believe this allowance of pluralism, of an inclusionary principle

is enshrined unambiguously in a paragraph in the Big Book that I refer to as the "Great

Disclaimer,"[92] as well as the Third Tradition of twelve which states: "The only

requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking."[93]

The leading principle of this step, I contend, is just that the alcoholic more than

likely cannot stay sober alone and must redirect her life toward something over-and-

above herself, something good. I refer to the Great Disclaimer and the third tradition as

license for the liberties I take in my analysis of the higher power idea; it is the

fundamental leading principle that, once accounted for by Peirce, can help to explain the

success of members in staying sober despite many believing in very different higher

power conceptions, or in none at all.

To understand how Peircean philosophy might make sense of this step, we should

look closely at the tendency of many newcomers, suspicious of the religious undertones

in the A.A. vocabulary, to adopt the *A.A. group* as their higher power. "You can, if you

wish, make A.A. itself your 'higher power.' Here's a very large group of people who

have solved their alcohol problem. In this respect they are certainly a power greater than

you, who have not even come close to a solution. Surely you can have faith in them."[94]

Indeed, the fellowship found in the meetings of A.A. is indispensable, regardless of any

one member's personal concept of a higher power, their common suffering being the

---

10. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous,* 12.
11. Bill W., 47, para. 1.
12. Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 139. The Twelve Traditions of A.A. are regulatory principles, borne out of tumultuous experience of the pioneering days of A.A.'s history, which guide individual groups and A.A. as a whole in their interactions amongst each other and with the public, so as to best protect the unity and purpose of the Fellowship.
13. Bill W., 27.

bond that holds members together.[95] I believe there are more ways than one to make Peircean hay out of this group-as-higher-power idea, ways that can expand it beyond being just a stepping stone on the path to faith in a deity. Some in A.A. would suggest that this is the real upshot of such a conception, that the group merely substitutes for God to make things more palatable in the beginning.[96] However, I believe that adopting the group forms the foundation for other higher power conceptions, and that it follows from the leading principle.

The Peirce-inspired expansion that I will attempt here is to look at the group, individually and collectively, as *symbolic* of a better way of life. That is, fellow A.A. members are themselves instantiations of ideals of conduct, symbolically representing ideals through their newly developed, constantly improving habits which ultimately free them from the insanity of alcoholic compulsion/habituation. These new habits, as we understand from Chapter Two, are Reasonableness, Thirdness, made *concrete*. This new, happier way of life and its fruits found in A.A. are attractive to the newcomer in an exceptionally meaningful way: ideals themselves have actually, not figuratively, helped to shape existent individuals by exerting a sort of attractive *power*. Vincent Colapietro explains:

> As Peirce suggests, a distinction can be drawn between being *forceful* and being *powerful* (5.520). It is appropriate to speak of ideals being powerful but not of them being forceful. Ideals have the capacity to shape existents, to mold

---

14. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 151-64.

15. One way that Peirce might approach this idea is through his philosophy of mind: his doctrine of *synechism* and the continuity of minds, and his conceptions of personality and the man-symbol. For Peirce, when a collection of two or more essentially communicative, conscious agents like human beings commune, they give rise to something that is more than the nominal aggregate of individual personalities. Indeed, another, *higher* personality emerges from this communication. I will not be utilizing this approach here, but for a tidy presentation of these ideas, see Vincent Michael Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State Univerersity of New York Press, 2006), 99-118.

actualities; thus, we may attribute power to them. However, ideals influence existents in a fundamentally different way than existents act on one another. Ideals do not *act on* existents; hence they cannot be said to be forceful. Their mode of influence (which Peirce calls 'logos-influence') is not brute compulsion, but creative love. To speak of creative love in this way means that there are influences truly operative in the world that possess these characteristics: These influences are gentle rather than brutal; that is, they call forth rather than push against; these influences *qua* loving are respectful of the natures of the things that they mold. The action of the sun upon a flower would be an example of such an influence.[97]

Through the agents of Concrete Reasonableness that populate Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, newcomers are directly influenced by the Power of ideals; membership in A.A. embeds the newcomer in a *community* of agents constantly seeking to improve their character. It is this very Power that will lead the alcoholic toward eventual restoration of sanity, that ideals will transform the alcoholic's life by their final realization in the alcoholic's new habits, considering that our habits constitute what we most truly are. Whatsoever each individual alcoholic may choose to refer to as their personal higher power — be it Yahweh, Allah, the Christ, Creative Intelligence, Spirit of the Universe, Love, the A.A. group, etc. — insofar as that personal conception *symbolizes* an ideal or better way to live and is interpreted as such by the alcoholic, it is supported by the Peircean philosophy that I am forwarding as the foundation of the Twelve Steps. To me there is little doubt that this symbolization and attraction are the true functions that "spiritual experiences" and Higher Powers are meant to serve.[98] "All

---

16. Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self*, 113.

17. Further support for this claim is particularly clear in Appendix II "Spiritual Experience" of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 567-68. Note well the mention of pragmatist philosopher William James: cofounder Bill Wilson was influenced by a reading of James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

of the Twelve Steps require sustained and personal exertion to *conform to their principles*

and so, we trust, *to God's will.*"[99]

Step Three: We made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God,

as we understood Him.

A Peircean interpretation of Higher Power (or God, as they are used

interchangeably throughout the steps) now in hand, a reading of Step Three falls out. The

"decision" to turn one's will and one's life over to the care of God, this is at bottom a

decision to adopt new ideals that will help to shape the habits in one's life. The

newcomer commits in Step Three to follow through with the course of action in Steps

Four through Twelve, which are designed to uncover negative habitual patterns in

behavior and encourage their replacement: "That is just where the remaining Steps of the

A.A. program come in. Nothing short of continuous action upon these as a way of life

can bring the much-desired result."[100]

This must be an undertaking guided by the experience of the fellowship of A.A.

and with the help of one's sponsor,[101] those who have found a new way and can help to

correct the insulated, idiosyncratic ways of looking at the world that an alcoholic

develops in her isolation over the course of her drinking career. "The philosophy of self-

sufficiency is not paying off… Therefore, we who are alcoholics can consider ourselves

fortunate indeed. Each of us has had his own near-fatal encounter with the juggernaut of

self-will, and has suffered enough under its weight to be willing to look for something

better."[102] The newcomer, in making her decision, commits to leaning on fellow members

---

18. Bill W., *Twelve Traditions*, 40 (emphasis added).
19. Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 40.
20. A sponsor is an experienced member who guides a newcomer through the steps.
21. Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 37-38.

for support. "Surely he must now depend upon Somebody or Something else. At first that 'somebody' is likely to be his closest A.A. friend. He relies upon the assurance that his many troubles, now made more acute because he cannot use alcohol to kill the pain, can be solved, too."[103]

A pragmatic understanding of the nature of belief comes in handy here. Belief, for Peirce, is in the final analysis an "establishment in our nature of some habit which will determine our actions."[104] That is, there is an upshot of *believing* any abstract proposition in the action that follows from that belief; this upshot, the practical consequences, is just what the proposition itself *means*. Following directly from the pragmatic maxim, "…*belief* consists mainly in being deliberately prepared to adopt the formula believed in as the guide to action."[105] To believe, then, is to act. Step Three is a junction at which the newcomer asks herself, do I believe that the A.A. program will work for me like it has worked for all the others? This step is a flag to pose this question, contemplate, then move on. What we can say is that the alcoholic will only know that she has made this decision in Step Three, that she truly believes in its promise, when she completes the rest of her step-work.

Step Four: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

On the underlying causes of which alcoholic drinking is but a symptom, A.A. is unequivocal: "Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on

---

22. Bill W., 39.
23. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," 1877, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 114.
24. Peirce, "The Maxim of Pragmatism," in *The Essential Vol.2*, 139.

the toes of our fellows and they retaliate."[106] "We have drunk to drown feelings of fear, frustration, and depression. We have drunk to escape the guilt of passions, and then have drunk again to make more passions possible. We have drunk for vainglory—that we might the more enjoy foolish dreams of pomp and power."[107] It is the Fourth Step inventory which enables the alcoholic to take an honest stock of her condition, to starkly recognize these sorts of behavioral patterns in her life and the destruction left in her wake. No doubt, Peirce would find great utility in this inventory: self-criticism, followed by self-correction, is necessary for us to be moral, and Step Four is one long-overdue exercise in self-criticism.

The Fourth Step systematically examines resentments, fears, and general harms done to others to uncover the "defects of character" that underly alcoholic drinking by moving from particular cases to generalizations. For my purposes here I will confine my analysis to the resentments inventory; fears and general harms follow similar form. The inventory is composed of 5 *handwritten* columns: (1) whom/what the alcoholic resents; (2) a brief description of the resentful situation; (3) what part of self felt threatened by the alleged offender; (4) what part that the alcoholic herself played in the formation of this resentment; and (5) the operative defect in her character behind her behavior.[108] Notice the alcoholic begins in column (1) with a supposedly justified resentment, and by column (4), though there are exceptions, she has to recognize *something, somewhere* along the line that she was guilty of, that either *initially caused* the circumstances that led to her

---

25. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 62.
26. Bill W., *Twelve Steps,* 44.
27. A typical row in a Fourth Step inventory might fill out like this: (1) My employer; (2) He fired me after fifteen years on the job; (3) This threatened my reputation, my financial security, personal relationships at work and at home; (4) This last year, I missed meetings and turned projects in way past due dates because I have felt entitled as a senior employee; (5) Pride.

resenting this person, or that served to unnecessarily aggravate things. She looks for the opportunity to take responsibility for something that is within her power to control, namely, her own conduct and no one else's.

There are two important upshots of the inventory process I wish to highlight. First, column (5) reveals patterns in how the alcoholic reacts to certain kinds of life circumstances. Made obvious are the recurrences of defects in her character, such as pride, selfishness, jealousy, self-centered fear, self-pity, when interacting with similar kinds of people, places, and things. These so-called character defects, these are just simply *habits* in our conduct, destructive habits that are exacerbated by alcoholism. Second, notice that the disparities between columns (2) and (4) reveal a distorted perception of the world. The resentment is almost always initially seen as a one-sided affair; the alcoholic simply feels slighted by someone, and feelings progressively sour as memories are constantly repainted. But as the realities of column (4) disclose, bad habits in her feelings, actions, and thoughts trapped the alcoholic in an idiosyncratic way of seeing the world, unable to differentiate appearance from reality. Help from a community of fellow alcoholics is required to correct these harmful idiosyncrasies.

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Most importantly in Step Five, the alcoholic shares her Fourth Step inventory with her sponsor, or another trusted member in the fellowship (those so inclined may bring their inventories to clergy or psychologists). Inventories uncover the worst about an alcoholic, her shortcomings, transgressions, and invariably some horrible secrets. The

guilt and shame of her past needs to be relieved for any chance of lasting sobriety, so

opening up to another alcoholic has this immediate benefit:

> A.A. experience has taught us we cannot live alone with our pressing problems
> and the character defects which cause or aggravate them. If we have swept the
> searchlight of Step Four back and forth over our careers, and it has revealed in
> stark relief those experiences we'd rather not remember, if we have come to know
> how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others, then the need to quit
> living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent
> than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.[109]
> Further, in Step Five there is a particularly poignant recognition of our inability as

reasoning agents to come to the truth about ourselves on our own: "If all our lives we had

more or less fooled ourselves, how could we now be so sure that we weren't still self-

deceived? How could we be certain that we had made a true catalog of our defects and

had really admitted them, even to ourselves?"[110] To reap the benefits of the arduous work

done in an inventory, then, the alcoholic shares with someone who can help her to sort

through her habits, to make important connections she wouldn't otherwise on her own.

This process yields a clearer look at the *reality* of who she is and is necessary to

overcoming that alcohol-drenched world as it appears to her. "What comes to us alone

may be garbled by our own rationalization and wishful thinking. The benefit of talking to

another person is that we can get his direct comment and counsel on our situation, and

there can be no doubt in our minds what that advice is."[111]

We saw in "The Doctrine of Chances" that we cannot even be logical without

embracing a community; one's interests cannot be limited to oneself if one wishes to

reason well in human affairs — to reason at all. Moreover, *inquiry*, the scientific

procession of reasoning which slowly converges on the *truth*, is dependent on logic.

---

28. Bill W., *Twelve Traditions*, 55.
29. Bill W., 59.
30. Bill W., 60.

Thus, as James Liszka puts so succinctly, "There is consequently an inherent connection of logic to inquiry and inquiry to community."[112] Consider these points of Peirce's in conjunction with Helen Longino's analysis of objectivity in our method of inquiry—that we move our *degree* of objectivity along a continuum in a positive relationship with the amount of intersubjective criticism we incur—and there is a strong case made that human beings need each other to have any chance of ultimately attaining the truth, including the truth about ourselves. The utility of the Fifth Step is embedded in these conclusions.

Step Six: We were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character,

& Step Seven: We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Common practice in A.A. is to treat Steps Six and Seven as conveying one larger message; it is difficult to handle one without reference to the other. In the Big Book, very little ink is dedicated to these steps, both being described in just a paragraph each. The practice of Step Six consists of quiet, solitary reflection following the taking of Step Five in which the alcoholic asks herself: "[Am I] now ready to let God remove from [me] all the things which [I] have admitted are objectionable?"[113] The work of Step Seven is delegated to a simple prayer: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."[114]

The obvious, practical suggestion underlying the higher power language in these steps is that the alcoholic needs to acknowledge or express in some meaningful way that

---

31. James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 99.
32. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 76.
33. Bill W., 76.

she is willing to correct the bad habits exposed in her inventory, and to adopt new ones that embody ideals. Again, the pragmatic understanding of belief provides this meaningful expression of willingness: what I believe is ultimately that which I am willing to adopt as a guide to action. We can also construe these steps as yet another junction in the alcoholic's recovery, like in Step Three, where the question is posed, do I earnestly *believe* that I need to change my behaviors and ways of looking at the world in order to live well and stay sober? To answer in the affirmative is to commit to finishing the rest of Steps and continually improving one's character, or habits—the upshot of the belief. For many, the passage from Step Six quoted above sufficiently poses the question, and the petitionary Seventh Step prayer expresses the answer.

Step Eight: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

These next few steps only require some rather straightforward remarks. In Step Eight, the list of casualties in the alcoholic's past is furnished from column (1) of the Fourth Step inventory. The alcoholic is advised again to seek the counsel of a sponsor and other group members to determine exactly who from their inventory it is appropriate to approach for reconciliation; poor motives and intentions on the part of the alcoholic may need weeding out by the fellowship. Once again, the requirement of willingness, in this case to make amends with those whom the alcoholic has come into conflict, can be addressed by pragmatic belief. The beliefs, and therefore the resolutions, adopted in Steps Three, Six and Seven instill in the alcoholic yet another rule for action: she ought to make things right in her relations with others. The upshot of this belief is in the practice of Step Nine.

Step Nine: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Here, the alcoholic is tasked with approaching each and every person on her Eighth Step list, confessing her improprieties, expressing her sincere intentions to change her conduct for good, and attempting a genuine restitution with those she has harmed wherever possible. Righting past wrongs in Step Nine is a mode of self-correction, which must follow from the project of self-criticism in Step Four. "Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence—these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine."[115] It is hoped that by this point in the program, after all this exposure to the ideals embodied in her fellows, the transformative process has really taken root in the alcoholic, and some of these qualities have begun to coagulate into habits in her conduct. Upon entering A.A., her life had been largely characterized as self-centered and self-serving; an about-face, getting honest and taking responsibility for the well-being of others, is required if she is really resolved to adjust to the dictates of evolutionary love as summed in the Golden Rule.[116]

Step Ten: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step Ten is essentially the practice of Steps Four, Eight, and Nine, now all *in concreto*, as it were, as the alcoholic goes about her daily life:

> A continuous look at our assets and liabilities, and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are necessities for us… More experienced people, of course, in all times and places have practiced unsparing self-survey and criticism. For the wise have always known that no one can make much of his life until *self-searching*

---

34. Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 83.
35. Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," in *The Essential Vol. 1*, 353.

becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, and until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong.[117]

Thus, in Peircean terms, Step Ten is simply the continuation of self-criticism and self-correction of one's conduct laid out in Practics. In the throes of alcoholism, these tools tend to gather dust; Steps Four and Nine reintroduce them in dramatic fashion, with more rigor than the newcomer may have ever been accustomed to. Step Ten, then, is meant to instill these tools *themselves* as daily, constant habits. It is the A.A. formalization of the necessary conditions for living a persistently improving good life.

Step Eleven: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

The upshot of this step lies mostly in the subordinate clause, "… praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." Now, if we accept that the role of the higher power concept as the conventional stand-in for the *ideals of conduct*, how might Peirce make sense of the notion of "His will?" And what could it mean to seek a deeper knowledge of this Will? First, a bit of what Bill W. has to say: "There is a direct linkage among self-examination, mediation, and prayer… As we have seen, self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures."[118] Thus it seems the practices of this step are in some way a continuation of the self-criticism and self-correction which serve as the transformative basis of the program. For those new to meditative practice, Bill suggests that quiet reflection on the import of the prayer of St. Francis may be a springboard,[119]

36. Bill W., *Twelve Steps*, 88 (emphasis added).
37. Bill W., 98.
38. Bill W., 99.

which "ought to be followed by a good look at where we stand now, and a further look at what might happen in our lives were we able to *move closer to the ideal* we have been trying to glimpse."[120]

Petitionary prayer, as A.A. conceives it, does not so much consist in "making specific requests" of one's higher power, but "simply that throughout the day God place in us the best understanding of His will that we can have for that day, and that we be given the grace by which we may carry it out."[121] These expository passages make clear that what is "sought" after, what this knowledge of "His will" for us basically consists in, pragmatically speaking, is an improved understanding of what one ought to aim at in their conduct, that is, of *ideals*. A.A.s colloquially refer to this as knowledge of "the next right thing." This essential practice is accounted for in Peirce's ethics, when, beyond the three levels of self-criticism of single-series actions, "a man will from time to time review his *ideals*," a sort of "personal meditation on the fitness of one's own ideals…[.]"[122]

It is this level of contemplation that I believe the A.A. suggestions of prayer and meditation are meant to stir: the alcoholic needs to consistently review and evaluate her progress; how her internal and external conditions, her lot in life, are shifting; how her set of ideals stack up to her developing esthetic sensibilities; the consistency between her ideals and, most importantly, the consistency of the set of her ideals with the ultimate ideal of conduct.

---

39. Bill W., 101 (emphasis added).
40. Bill W., 102.
41. Peirce, "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?" in *The Essential Vol. 2*, 248

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

With this sketch of the first eleven steps now in place, an interpretation of the Twelfth Step is furnished easily. First, as we noted earlier, a "spiritual awakening" is the complete personality change which results from working the steps: "Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them."[123] By aiming herself towards the ultimate ideal, abolishing old habits, and instilling new ones, the alcoholic has transformed; she is not who she was when she first darkened the doors of an A.A. meeting. She finds herself now immeasurably better equipped and motivated to love her neighbor; she is enmeshed in a community of agents trying to do their part to make this world a bit more Reasonable. Moved by the "ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse,"[124] members rightly feel themselves responsible for the newcomer that stumbles into the program as broken and directionless as they were, to "carry this message."

To "practice these principles in all of our affairs" is to make the evolutionary process enshrined in the Twelve Steps a working reality of daily living. The commitment to Reasonable Reasonableness, consistency in our ideals; consideration of, trust and participation in an unlimited community; the willingness to consistently and honestly self-critique and self-correct; these are indispensable to living the good life as it is

---

42. Bill W., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 27. These words are attributed by Bill to Dr. Carl Jung, in relaying the story of Jung's treatment of an early A.A. predecessor.

43. Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," in *The Essential Vol. 1*, 354.

conceived in the Peircean philosophy and delivered in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics

Anonymous, as I have sought to illustrate here.

Conclusion

The above interpretation reveals the many points of contact between the

conceptual frameworks of the Alcoholics Anonymous program and the Peircean

philosophy. As a result, many issues that arise from a cursory look at The Twelve Steps

can be resolved or clarified, issues that could only be further confounded by Craigean

philosophy: first and foremost, the God or higher power language with which the A.A.

literature is shot through can be framed as fundamentally symbolic of the ideals of

conduct that are embodied in the Fellowship of the program. The pragmaticist conception

of belief elucidates the important practical consequences behind the decisions to be made

and the willingness to be expressed in Steps Three, Seven, and Eight. The inventory

process in Steps Four and Five, the meditative reflection in Step Eleven, these are the

A.A. vehicles of change that are requisite of the Peircean self-critical, self-corrective,

habit-forming good life in accordance with Reason. The responsibilities that members

assume for the development of their characters and for the well-being of others, which

must become a working part of life in Step Twelve, these are the responsibilities of the

agents of Creative Love. The success of the recovery program in A.A. is nothing

mysterious or miraculous to the Peircean.

Bibliography

Aydin, Ciano. "On the Significance of Ideals: Charles S. Peirce and the Good Life."
Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2009): 422-43.
http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2149357&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Colapietro, Vincent Michael. *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany: State Univerersity of New York Press, 2006.

Craig, William Lane. "Anti-Platonism and Moral Realism." Reasonablefaith.org. Last modified July 20, 2014. https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/anti-platonism-and-moral-realism/.

———. "Anti-Realism and Truth." Reasonablefaith.org. Last modified November 2, 2014. https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/anti-realism-and-truth/.

———. "Nominalism and Natural Law." Reasonablefaith.org. Last modified August 30, 2015. https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/nominalism-and-natural-law/.

———. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

Erdur, Melis. "A Moral Argument against Moral Realism." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: An International Forum* 19, no. 3 (June 1, 2016): 591-602. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2334162&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Feibleman, James. "A Systematic Presentation of Peirce's Ethics." *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* 53 (January 1, 1943): 98-109. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL1004489&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Lindsay, Ronald A. "How Morality Has the Objectivity That Matters -- Without God." *Free Inquiry* 34, no. 5 (August 1, 2014): 16-23. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2229149&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Liszka, James Jakób. *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Longino, Helen E. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020. Digital file.

Magada-Ward, Mary. "As Parts of One Esthetic Total: Inference, Imagery, and Self-Knowledge in the Later Peirce." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* New Series 17, no. 3 (2003): 216-23. https://doi.org/10.1353/jsp.2003.0042.

———. "What is the American Sublime? Ruminations on Peircian Phenomenology and the Paintings of Barnett Newman." *Contemporary Pragmatism* 16, no. 1 (2019): 30-39. https://doi.org/10.1163/18758185-0161121.

Moore, Edward C. "The Scholastic Realism of C S Peirce." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 12 (March 1, 1952): 406-17. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL1001822&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

One Big Tent: Atheist and Agnostic AA Members Share Their Experience, Strength and Hope. New York, NY: A.A. Grapevine, 2018.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. "The Doctrine of Chances." 1878. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 142-54. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. "Evolutionary Love." 1893. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 352-71. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. "The Fixation of Belief." 1877. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 109-23. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." 1878. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 124-41. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. "The Maxim of Pragmatism." 1903. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by The Peirce Edition Project, 133-44. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

———. "On Phenomenology." 1903. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by The Peirce Edition Project, 145-59. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

———. "The Seven Systems of Metaphysics." 1903. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by The Peirce Edition Project, 179-95. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

———. "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities." 1868. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1 (1867-1893)*, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 28-55. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

———. "The Three Normative Sciences." 1903. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by The Peirce Edition Project, 196-207. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

———. "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?" 1903. In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 2 (1893-1913)*, edited by The Peirce Edition Project, 242-57. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Smith, R. Scott. "Craig, Anti-Platonism, and Objective Morality." *Philosophia Christi* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2017): 331-43. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2365680&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Smythe, Thomas W., and Michael Rectenwald. "Craig on God and Morality." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51:3, no. 203 (September 1, 2011): 331-38. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2178004&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Vainio, Olli-Pekka. "Objective Morality after Darwin (and without God)?" *Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 56, no. 4 (July 1, 2015): 584-92. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2307134&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

W., Bill. *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism*. New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001.

———. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2017.

Wagener, Dan, ed. "What Is the Success Rate of AA?" Americanaddictioncenters.org. Last modified May 19, 2020. https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/12-step/whats-the-success-rate-of-aa.

Wielenberg, Erik J. "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism." *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 23-41. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pif&AN=PHL2131762&site=ehost-live&scope=site.