

Article

The Secular Moral Project and the Moral Argument for God: A Brief Synopsis History

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Abstract: This article provides an overview of the history of what is termed the secular moral project by providing a synopsis of the history of the moral argument for God's existence and the various historical processes that have contributed to the secularization of ethics. I argue that three key thinkers propel the secular moral project forward from the middle of the 19th century into the 20th century: John Stuart Mill, whose ethical thinking in *Utilitarianism* serves as the background to all late 19th century secular ethical thinking, Henry Sidgwick, who, in the *Methods*, indisputably establishes the secular autonomy of ethics as a distinctive discipline (metaethics), and finally, G.E. Moore, whose work, the *Principia Ethica*, stands at the forefront of virtually all secular metaethical debates concerning naturalism and non-naturalism in the first half of the 20th century. Although secular metaethics continues to be the dominant ethical view of the academy, it is shown that theistic metaethics is a strong reemerging position in the early 21st century.

Keywords: secular ethics; metaethics; Mill; Sidgwick; Moore; moral argument for God

1. The Moral Argument for God: A Brief Synopsis

In considering the moral argument for the existence of God, it is only appropriate to have a sense of the background and history of this particular argument in the historical debates of normative ethics and metaethics. Dave Baggett and Jerry Walls have written an excellent overview and analysis of the history of the moral argument for God's existence entitled *The Moral Argument: A History* (Baggett and Walls 2019). The history of this particular argument, rarely thoroughly considered, is interesting and impressive. Consider the following quick synopsis. The modern form of the moral argument proper is usually traced back to Immanuel Kant {1724–1804}, (Kant [1785] 2012 *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; Kant [1788] 2015; *Critique of Practical Reason*; Kant [1797] 2017 *The Metaphysics of Morals*).¹ Among other notable thinkers who advanced a positive form of the moral argument are John Henry Newman (1801–1890) in his *Aid to a Grammar of Ascent* (1870), Arthur Balfour {1848–1930} (Balfour 1915, in *Theism and Humanism*; Balfour 1923, *Theism and Thought*),² William Sorley {1885–1935} in his *On The Ethics of Naturalism*, (Sorley [1884] 2015); also *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, (Sorley 1918).³ Hastings Rashdall {1858–1924} also made unique contributions in his *The Theory of Good and Evil: A Treatise on Moral Philosophy* (Rashdall 1907, vol. 1&2), Clement Webb {1865–1954} in his *God and Personality*, (Webb 1918), W.G. de Burgh {1866–1942}, *From Morality to Religion*, (De Burgh [1938] 1970),⁴ A.E. Taylor {1869–1945}, in his *The Faith of a Moral-ist* (Taylor 1930), W.R. Matthews {1881–1973} in his *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, (Matthews 1947), A.C. Ewing {1899–1973} in his *Values and Reality: The Philosophical Case for Theism*, (Ewing 1973), C.S. Lewis {1898–1963} in his well-known *Mere Christianity*, (Lewis 1978; *The Abolition of Man*, (Lewis 1978),⁵ and finally H.P. Owen ({1926–1996}), *The Moral Argument for Christian Theism*, (Owen 1965) and Basil Mitchell {1917–2011} *Morality, Religious and Secular: The Dilemma of the Traditional Conscience*, (Mitchell 2000; *Law, Morality, and Religion in a Secular Society*), (Mitchell 1967).



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In the period since C.S. Lewis's writings, there has been a resurgence in Theistic philosophy and ethics and a resurgence specifically in the moral argument for God's existence. A brief sample of works will illustrate this point. Take for example Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (1999); Robert Merrihew Adams, "Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief" (1987); John Hare, *God's Command* (2015); John Hare, "Naturalism and Morality", (2002); "Naturalism's Incapacity to Capture the Good Will", (Willard 2011); *The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge*. (Willard 2018); Mark Linville, "The Moral Argument", (Linville 2012); William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, (Craig 2008); Angus Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments* (Ritchie 2012); David Baggett and Jerry Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Baggett and Walls 2011) as well as their *God and Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (Baggett and Walls 2016); Paul Copan, "The Moral Argument", (2005); Paul Copan. "Hume and the Moral Argument" (2005); *Atheism?: A Critical Analysis* (Parrish 2019); Stephen Parrish (forthcoming), *The Nature of Moral Necessity; Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (Evans 2010); *God and Moral Obligation* (Evans 2014). (Baggett 2018; Jakobsen 2020); "The Moral Argument", (Evans and O'Neill 2021); Matthew Carey Jordan, "Some Metaethical Desiderata and the Conceptual Resources of Theism", (Jordan 2011); *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism* (Moreland 2009); *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Moreland and Rae 2000); William Lane Craig et al., *A Debate on God and Morality: What Is the Best Account of Objective Moral Values and Duties?* (Craig et al. 2020); Adam (2023). *Divine Love Theory: How the Trinity Is the Source and Foundation of Morality.*; Dale Kratt, "A Theistic Critique of Secular Moral Nonnaturalism" (Kratt 2023).

Several notable features stand out as one considers the history of the moral argument. First, it is interesting that the moral argument does not take definite form and shape as a distinct evidential argument for God until the connections from the human moral domain to God become, in some sense, problematic. David Hume (1711–1776) and others, during the period dubbed the Enlightenment, directly challenged prevailing arguments for natural theology, various religious beliefs, and the Theistic basis for morality (see Hume [1739] 1984, [1779] 1998). Hume's work was quite effective at the time, and his efforts have had a continuing and lasting influence and continue to generate strong assessments for and against (see Sennett and Groothuis 2005).

Today, the questions and challenges to the God-and-moral-order connection persist. However, many current secular thinkers refuse to engage with the theistic arguments or even to acknowledge the history of the moral argument that we briefly reviewed above.⁶ They remain fully committed to what will be termed here the *secular moral project*. Nevertheless, the sophistication of contemporary theistic-centered philosophy, theistic metaethics, various developments in natural theology, and the moral argument are notable. Next, from the history of the moral argument, it is also instructive to consider how the differing arguments proceed and which particular facets of the multifaceted phenomena of the moral order each thinker has chosen to focus on. From this, it can be seen that the moral domain, and consequently the moral argument, is a very deep, wide, and rich area that continues to present new opportunities and challenges for Christian thinkers.⁷

The moral argument for God's existence can legitimately take many forms that focus both on distinct features of the moral domain and differing aspects of the 'God side' of the equation. Furthermore, we are incorrigibly moral, since human beings are inescapably immersed in the moral domain. If the God of Theism exists, then the existence of this God is not only relevant to how we understand the normative order of Reality, but an account of this order will most certainly be misunderstood if the Living God is not taken into consideration (MacIntyre 2011).⁸

Finally, the moral argument for God's existence is not only in good intellectual company, with a venerable history, but also remains profoundly relevant in today's world, on multiple fronts. To be sure, naturalism continues to be a primary challenge. However, from William Sorley onward (Sorley 1904, 1905, 1918), various Christian thinkers have

successfully met the challenges of naturalism and naturalistic ethics. But there is now also the ascending challenge of secular non-naturalist metaethics (moral Platonism)⁹ as well as the various and sundry versions of realism, non-realism, constructivism, error theory, and others. It is important to note, however, that there is a long lineage of Christian moral thinkers who have done good work in the past, as well as contemporary Christian thinkers, and so what I am calling the *theistic moral project* is also once again in the ascendancy. But this project does not start from scratch; it just needs to be creatively reworked and expanded to meet the array of contemporary challenges.

2. The Cultural Processes of Secularization

The Historical Opening for Secular Ethics

In this paper, “secular” simply refers to God-excluding ethical thinking. This need not involve active hostility to Theism but only that God is not considered in relation to any particular moral project.¹⁰ However, secularism, as part of secularization, involves much more than excluding God. The interest of this section is to briefly understand the broader and more encompassing story of secularization as it unfolds and to situate the development of ethical thinking and metaethics in the 21st century.

The 19th-century context of British moral philosophy is vital for an understanding the historical background of the rise of the discipline of metaethics. For example, almost all thinkers reviewed in our synopsis of the moral argument for God’s existence worked in this broader context of British moral philosophy.¹¹ This broader context is vital for understanding G.E. Moore and his predecessors. Given his influential work *Principia Ethica*, Moore is considered a pivotal thinker who bridges late 19th and early 20th century ethical philosophy. If one examines the field of contemporary metaethics, it is evident that most contemporary metaethical thinkers view their work as part of the more comprehensive secular moral project (see Bourget and Chalmers 2014). Of course, the secular need not necessarily exclude God, and it need not entail wholesale atheism. For example, while metaphysical naturalism entails atheism, moral non-naturalism does not. Secular moral naturalism and secular moral non-naturalism disagree on the wider metaphysics of normative Reality. However, they generally agree that there is no God, or that God is of no account in systematically thinking through the moral, the ethical, the normative,¹² the prescriptive, the obligatory (categorical), the aesthetic, or the axiological, and just as importantly, the scientific. A more careful look at secularism and secularization is then in order. Charles Taylor in his (Taylor 2007) eminent work entitled *A Secular Age*, begins his wide-ranging study of secularization in Western society with this incisive question.

One way to put the question that I want to answer here is this: why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?¹³

The secular moral project we are interested in occurs in this broader opening of secularization in Western society. Few would dispute the claim that today’s Western culture is secular in a considerable measure and some general sense. But what precisely is secularization, and how is it to be understood? How did secularization of the culture occur historically, and what are its implications and impact? A brief examination of these questions is essential to establish a broader context for our understanding of the secular moral project. As is common knowledge, the details are disputed. Overall, secularization is a historically complex, fully multi-dimensional, socio-cultural process that occurs over time and ranges from a given society’s macro-level institutions, middle-level organizations, the family–household, and micro-level personal experiences of the lifeworld. The personal lifeworld is a part of this broader process of secularization. The lifeworld involves the whole taken-for-granted practical world of a person’s day-to-day life embedded within a wider umbrella of organizations and institutions. It is the dimension of personal, taken-for-granted beliefs, experiences, sensibilities, and everyday practices. The embedded individual’s day-to-day lifeworld and wider embedding macro context makes up the full range of the story of secularization.

A full account of secularization would deal with this full scope. But this scope is obviously too broad and complex to be examined here. Yet awareness of this broader scope helps us point out a few common misconceptions about secularization. Clearly, secularization involves more than a mere change of ideas and beliefs. Also, it is more than simply a change of beliefs; it is a wholesale change of life practice and worldview. The material conditions of secularization are deep and diffuse. Sometimes, the secularization of society is caricatured as the advancement of reason and science that results in the inevitable decline of irrational belief in God and religion. This sort of activist characterization is much too quick and involves a particular vested spin on how secularization is to be understood. Charles Taylor convincingly argues against the idea that secularization is a one-sided story of the loss of God, the inevitable outcome of modernization, and a coming of age that has thrown God off. He calls this view the subtraction thesis.

Most importantly, the subtraction thesis cannot explain the persistence of religious belief and practice in the West and outside the Western world. But neither can it readily explain the optimistic side of secularization—a positive humanist belief in and total commitment to unbridled human powers of self-determination, human autonomy, rationality, general human flourishing as an ultimate good, and a fully human-sourced morality (ibid. pp. 253, 572). Clearly, this moral repertoire is more than mere subtraction of God.

A brief survey of some of the broader and deeper dimensional changes is helpful to situate our analysis. Historically at the macro level from the top-down, secularization involves a complex process of institutional transformation, separation, and differentiation over time. The economic dimension and the rise of capitalism involve new technologies of production, transportation, finance, energy, mechanization, architecture, warfare, and communication. In part, this is the industrial revolution. The economic order becomes rationally objectified and differentiated as a distinct order of production, consumption, commodification, and wealth; this also requires the innovative birth of modern finance. The economic order also shapes both the bottom-up content and practice of personal disciplinary virtue at the micro level that capitalism requires; workers must be disciplined and specialized to be productive and contribute to the civil and economic order. Next, it is important to consider the unfolding political dimension and the rise of the nation-state that involves new forms of the political structuring of power, social ordering, and law.

Constitutionalism is born, and its notion of political rights comes to the fore. Along with this, political, military, and economic power can be projected across the globe as never before by various competing nation-states, hence the global Western colonialist legacy and the continued inertia regarding globalization. Commodities can be sourced and extracted from across the globe. The late 20th century and early 21st century see the continued rise of multinationals. Then add the religious dimension—in particular, the reformation.

The reformation becomes a constant force for radical religious reform that generates religious institutional differentiation and religious organizational pluralization. The secular order comes to encompass and embed the religious order. Some view this religious and political separation as the heart of the secularization process. The transformation of religious practice and pluralization also occur from the bottom up at the individual practice level within middle-range organizations. The reformation thinkers challenge and attenuate a sacred/secular distinction of practice and vocation. With the ascendance of the physical sciences, new forms of knowledge in the sciences, mathematics, and the arts proliferate and accumulate. These transform our understanding of the physical world, from astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and the arts—all contributing to developing new technologies and accounts of human nature and the physical world. Evolutionary theory becomes central to the sciences from the middle of the 19th century onward. Additionally, the sciences transform the dimension of education; the Academy shifts from a classical educational format to a more science and technical-based format. The human-centered place in the cosmos gives way to the peripheral human place in the more expansive but finite universe.

Of course, Taylor understands that the material conditions of modernity are important. But these conditions do not cause secularization, explain secularization, or explain the numerous changes associated with secularism (Taylor 1989, pp. 310–13, 393–418). His analysis of secularization is a wide and detailed interdisciplinary account. It is strongly interpretive. The analysis here will build upon Taylor's analysis to further clarify the subject matter. He identifies several significant transformations in his work that are important to recognize clearly. There is a transition from a fulsome transcendent theism to a much thinner and remote providential deism (Taylor 2007, pp. 221–69).¹⁴ The personal God of theism is no longer seen as an agent that speaks and acts in history (ibid., pp. 274–75). In this shift in belief, the broadest horizon of Reality and humanity's relationship to it is transformed. The relation of God and the created world and the relation of God to the human order of things are reconceived and reconstituted in different ways (ibid., p. 43). In part, this results from what Taylor calls the "great disembedding" in which the social and ritual facets of religious practice and experience are transformed and broken up by decisively shifting towards the individual (ibid., pp. 146–58). The reformation contributes to this shift. In many ways, this is a positive shift. However, with the eclipse of a personal God, the new order in many ways also becomes a complex, impersonal order; a vast sea of governing cosmic natural laws, impersonal causes and mechanisms, formulas and functions, impersonal social and historical laws, impersonal moral ideals, codes, and requirements. (ibid., pp. 270–93). However, that the world was made for human beneficence remains central to both theism and deism. In addition, religion becomes narrowed to a diffuse but rather thin moralism in deism (ibid., p. 225).

From the shift to providential deism, only one step away from atheism, there is the related transition to seeing the world in which one lives as disenchanted instead of enchanted. I describe these changes this way. A "disenchanted world" is a world in which a barrier exists between the lifeworld and what is referred to here as World2. By World2 is meant the immaterial world that includes God, who is Spirit, the gods, spirits, angels, demons, invisible powers, and even the dead, including the world of the afterlife (ibid., p. 147).¹⁵ It is obvious that, in different cultures, World2 is conceived in different ways. An "enchanted world" means that whatever powers are taken to occupy World2 can influence World1 (the physical world) and the lifeworld of individuals. As part of this shift to disenchantment, there is a transformation towards seeing the self, the lifeworld, as "buffered" rather than "porous". In describing the lifeworld as "porous", Taylor means that there is an open connection, penetration, and interchange between World2 and the lifeworld (ibid., pp. 35–43). By "buffered", he means that an open porous interchange is closed off (ibid., pp. 135–42).¹⁶ There is outright denial that World2 exists in disenchantment, or the lifeworld is isolated or buffered from World2.

Secularization also involves a transformation in one's sense of time and history. Without a transcendent God, the broader temporal horizon is still considered as linear, but the sense of time becomes flattened, a strictly horizontal flow of time. The lifeworld is only situated within real World1 time (ibid., pp. 54–59). But this horizontal flow of time is still defined by a linear notion of historical progress on all fronts. These combined changes contribute to what Taylor further describes as a developing crystallization of an "immanent frame" of experience and thinking (ibid., pp. 542–57). By this, he means that the totality of human life and thought become enframed within this-worldly immanence instead of an other-worldly transcendence. Central to the immanent frame is "exclusive humanism", (ibid., pp. 242–69).¹⁷ Humanism of this sort is a radical shift, an intra-human, "inward turn in the form of disengaged reason", (ibid., p. 257).¹⁸ Exclusive humanism becomes a fully rational and moral vision in which human nature is valorized (ibid., p. 256).¹⁹ It is thought possible to utilize exclusively humanly sourced powers of reason, morality, values, and the sciences to achieve exclusively human ends of progress and human flourishing. Associated with this is a transition from a universal ethic grounded in Christian *agape* to a universal and idealized commitment focused exclusively on human beneficence in this world. The key is that all of this is God-excluding, either actively or passively. It is a

distinctively anthropocentric moral ideal and commitment (ibid., p. 247). Humanity alone becomes the locus of a positive and exclusive humanist belief in, and total commitment to, unconstrained human powers of self-determination, human autonomy, rationality, political freedom, universal justice, generalized human flourishing as an ultimate good, and an exclusively human-sourced morality and scheme of values. Taylor convincingly argues that none of this would have been possible without the prior groundwork laid by Christian theism. He states,

... all present issues around secularism and belief are affected by a double historicity, a two-tiered perfecttensedness. On one hand, unbelief and exclusive humanism defined itself in relation to earlier modes of belief, both orthodox theism and enchanted understandings of the world; and this definition remains inseparable from unbelief today. On the other hand, later-arising forms of unbelief, as well as all attempts to redefine and recover belief, define themselves in relation to this first path-breaking humanism of freedom, discipline, and order. (ibid., p. 269)

As regards religion, after the reformation, an unending and continuous pluralism of both belief and unbelief unfolds (ibid., p. 437; see also [MacIntyre 1998](#)).²⁰ In many respects, this development is positive. Over time, both belief and unbelief are subjected to tremendous cross-pressures and what Taylor calls fragilization (ibid., pp. 303–4). He has dubbed this contentious explosion and proliferation of religious and spiritual options beyond orthodoxy a “nova effect”. The pluralized world of today lives in the aftermath of this nova effect.

3. Mill, Sidgwick and Moore

This section will explore more specific historical developments while taking the preceding as a general context for understanding the secular moral project. By the middle of the 19th century, when our analysis will now pick up, the full opening of secularization is firmly in play and continuing to unfold. Into this broader opening, the secular moral project develops. Three specific thinkers, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, and G.E Moore, are relevant to our analysis. Here is the logic behind selecting these three successive thinkers as decisive for the development of the secular moral project. Moore is the transitional thinker leading into the modern period who set the debates for early 20th century metaethics. These debates continue into the present. But, prior to Moore, Sidgwick is the critical thinker that sets the table for Moore by ‘doing ethics’ differently, by doing metaethics. Sidgwick, along with Mill, laid the groundwork for the modern period by laboring to work out the basis and details for a new and fully adequate secular ethics. Hence, these three thinkers are decisive for understanding the development of the secular moral project.

Theism has always provided a natural and unproblematic placement within which the moral order of things is fittingly nested ([Parfit 1987](#), pp. 452–54).²¹ If God exists, then the moral order is grounded. To be sure, the details of this are worked out in different ways in Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and other versions of Theism. But all Theists agree that God, who is personal, who is fundamentally a moral, spiritual being, by virtue of being God, must somehow be the ultimate source of the normative order. In a Theistic world, all credible, ethical sources involve God and are intimately linked to God. They must depend upon God in some fundamental way. This dependence on God also has profound practical implications. In this sense, historically, a God-given moral order not only structured and guided the whole of life in thinking and practice but also indirectly showed God’s undeniability ([Taylor 1989](#), pp. 303–4). This order of human life needed God. However, once the deniability of God becomes broadly plausible, the very foundations of the moral order are also questioned. Secularization then forces a rethinking of the moral order down to the foundations. Once there is a total commitment to an exclusive humanism that is optimistic about rationally elaborating a fully humanly sourced moral vision, the

gauntlet is laid down for fully engaging and developing the secular moral project. This need must be filled and hammered out by serious secular moral thinkers.

Otherwise, the secular project will morally flounder. Secular thinkers are forced to squarely face a whole host of thorny questions and problems concerning the moral order, given the premise and conditions of secularization. Mere reactionary critiques of Theism will no longer suffice in this regard. Secular worldview logic has a straightforward premise; since God does not exist, this fact must be squarely faced on all fronts. The big questions still loom very large indeed. For example, how should we think and live? Why should we believe and live this way or that way, and how can this thinking and living be systematically formulated in a strictly secular view of Reality? The secular moral project becomes central to this broader set of pressing questions and concerns.

4. John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) not only feels the need for such an account but also takes up the challenge of trying to develop one adequately. Mill's writings are prolific, and his impact was significant.²² Several aspects of his thinking will be briefly discussed before moving on to the work of Sidgwick and Moore.²³ Mill was raised by his father in the tradition of *philosophical radicalism* to become the ultimate Victorian intellectual and utilitarian reformer (Brink 2018, p. 3).²⁴ It is significant that as a young man, between the years 1826–1830, Mill suffered from a severe period of depression. He experienced a deep intellectual and emotional crisis (ibid., p.4). In the period that Mill writes, he pens not only his classic work on the ethics of utilitarianism (1861)²⁵ but also philosophical works arguing against various elements of Theism and natural theology by critiquing the standard pieces of evidence put forward in favor of Theism (Mill [1874] 1998).²⁶ Mill was an exclusive humanist who advocated what Auguste Comte called the religion of humanity (Raeder 2001, 2002).²⁷ In this religion surrogate, humanity becomes a kind of object of devotion, as both the source and object of moral good and endeavor. Two additional things should be noted about the context in which Mill writes. First, Paley's work on natural theology (Paley [1802] 2017²⁸) was still highly influential at the time, so much so that Mill felt compelled to respond to the prevailing arguments of Paley.²⁹ Frederick Rosen takes Paley's natural theology as the spiritual core of the metaphysics of the British Enlightenment (Rosen 2005, p. 113). But Paley's work in moral and political philosophy (1785) was also highly influential (Schneewind 1977, p. 177).³⁰ Paley was a proponent of a version of Theistic utilitarianism (Paley [1785] 2017).³¹ Both of Paley's works were commonly used as textbooks for years in the first half of the 19th century (Fyfe 1997).³² Second, Mill fully recognized that an adequate and complete secular ethics had yet to be worked out. In 1847 Mill urged John Austin to write a systematic treatise on morals, without which the kind of moral reform Mill, Austin, and others were hoping for could not be achieved (Schneewind 1977, p. 178).³³ Mill also shared his views in 1854 that "ethics as a branch of philosophy is still to be created" (ibid.)³⁴ This year, 1854, was the same year that *Utilitarianism* was drafted; after some 30 years of thought, his final revisions came in 1859, and it was finally published in 1861 (Irwin 2011, p. 364). Initially, it was only marginally impactful. Only gradually was it noticed and given critical attention (Schneewind 1977, pp. 178–88). It is now the best-known account of classical utilitarianism to date. But Mill was no staunch atheist. He was a Theist of sorts, a believer in a finite Theistic God, what some have referred to as a "probable Theist". This can be seen both from the practical side of his life and his posthumously published essay entitled "Theism". (Settanni 1991; Devigne 2006; Carr 1962).³⁵ Although Mill worked to contribute to the secular moral project, he also recognized that it was far from complete. He saw it as just beginning. But clearly Mill believed that there was a comprehensive moral answer, though he could not provide it fully. This point is significant. Mill is not committed to anything like moral skepticism or moral nihilism.

Moreover, he developed his utilitarian account after a long line of previous thinkers, both secular and religious, had espoused some form of utilitarianism.³⁶ He attempted to remedy previous problems and misconceptions throughout his argument, which sought to develop a convincing account of utilitarianism and provide a kind of “proof” of utilitarianism.³⁷ Most agree that his proof is less than successful. Nevertheless, Mill was a highly influential political and moral reformer, philosopher, and statesman; his moral philosophy was worked out toward these larger ends. He believed philosophy could change how people thought and lived regarding moral good and that this could have a positive social, political, and economic impact. This project is in complete agreement with Mill in this regard. How important, then, is Mill? Given his work, David O. Brink takes Mill as the most influential philosopher of the 19th century in British moral philosophy.³⁸

5. Henry Sidgwick

While Mill’s work leaves the secular moral project unfinished, still to be created, it also overlaps and leads into the work of Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), author of *The Methods of Ethics* (1907, 7th edition).³⁹ Schneewind comments on this monumental work of Sidgwick.

It was not until Sidgwick’s *Methods*, which tried to reconcile these two schools (intuitionism and utilitarianism), that all the characteristics of a modern treatment of ethics were fully and deliberately brought together in a single work. Sidgwick is often described as the last of the classical utilitarian’s. He may with as much accuracy be viewed as the first of the modern moralists. (1997, p. 122)

In what ways might Sidgwick be considered the first of the modern moralists? It has mostly to do with the way that Sidgwick went about the task of ethical philosophy, and the reasons why he did it.⁴⁰ A lot of this can be gleaned from his introduction to the *Methods*. Sidgwick completed the first edition of the *Methods* when he was 36 years old in 1874. The final seventh edition was completed and published after his death in 1907. He spent his entire academic life revising the *Methods*. His influence is clearly seen in that the dominant forms of the problems of later British and American moral philosophy were, in many important ways, shaped by his work.⁴¹ (Harrison 1996). In the very first sentence of the *Methods*, Sidgwick points out that the boundaries of ethics have been variously and vaguely conceived. Deliberately and clearly establishing the boundaries of ethics was thus a major part of what Sidgwick set out to do in the *Methods* (1907, pp. 11–12).⁴² Throughout the *Methods*, he works to clearly differentiate ethics from other disciplines, such as politics, economics, philosophical metaphysics, or theology (ibid., pp. 78–80). Sidgwick also shows how ethics must be distinct from psychology and sociology (1907, p. 2).⁴³ When Sidgwick writes, moral philosophy includes these various disciplines within its scope. According to Sidgwick, ethics is an autonomous discipline standing on its own (ibid., 507). Its aims, sources, and boundaries should have clear limits while not borrowing fundamental premises from other sources (ibid.).

Sidgwick thus establishes the autonomy of ethics, a significant achievement in the secular moral project. Establishing the autonomy of ethics also helps to further distinguish between first order ethics and second-order metaethics. This distinction is central to 20th and 21st-century ethical theory and had much to do with Sidgwick’s work.⁴⁴ For example, first order ethics might discuss what our various duties are. Second-order metaethics seeks to understand the nature of duty itself—what duty itself fundamentally consists of. Much of Sidgwick’s discussion in the *Methods* is worked out at the level of the metaethical, as one can see in his analysis of what is “good”, “right”, the notions of “ought”, “virtue”, “duty”, and so on. In the wake of the *Methods*, ethical analysis at the abstract level of metaethics has become commonplace, an independent specialty in ethics. According to Sidgwick, a related claim follows from his analysis that there is a fundamental distinction between “is” and “ought”. This means that a truly categorical “ought” cannot be derived from an existing particular thing or an infinite collection of particular things (1907, pp. 25, 396; see also Phillips 2011, pp. 55–57). Next, Sidgwick fully recognizes that the situation within

which the ethical theorist works is pluralistic. Sidgwick seeks to understand and explain why and how this is so. The major ethical viewpoints in British moral philosophy at the time that Sidgwick wrote were egoism, intuitionism, and utilitarianism. This pluralism is the starting point for the *Methods*, analyzing its character and working out ethical theory to cut through various confusions induced by conflicting viewpoints.⁴⁵ The *Methods* seeks to work out a unique synthesis in this regard. By and large, Sidgwick accomplishes this. He ends up synthesizing an intuitionally grounded utilitarianism.⁴⁶

Notwithstanding Sidgwick's efforts, however, ethical pluralism since the *Methods* has only increased. Next, theoretical ethics for Sidgwick is a fully human undertaking. This is key. Fundamentally, ethics is a task undertaken by human beings for human beings, and it is basically about human beings. The task of ethical thinking excludes anything above and beyond the human, even if such might exist (1907, pp. 114–15). Sidgwick's exclusive humanism is evident here. Ethics is a fallible human project and mostly a secular moral project. But this does not mean, as will be further seen, that Sidgwick subscribes to atheism. He does not. Nevertheless, after Sidgwick, the secular moral project is in full swing. So then, for Sidgwick, the project of ethics is progressive given that first order ethical views will change over time. The ethical views of the future will probably differ from those of the present in the same way that the views of the ancients differ from those of the moderns. What "ought" consists of will not change (the metaethical), whereas what we take to be our specific "oughts" may very well change over time (Sidgwick and Sidgwick 1906, pp. 607–8).

By a *method* of ethics, Sidgwick means "any rational procedure by which we determine what individual human beings 'ought'—or what is 'right' for them—to do, or to seek to realize by voluntary action" (Sidgwick 1962, p. 1). He recognizes a diversity of methods in ordinary practical ethical thinking (ibid., p. 6; see also Brink 1994, pp. 179–201). In this, Sidgwick identifies three primary methods: egoism, utilitarianism, and intuitionism. According to Sidgwick, the study of the methods of ethics should involve "systematic and precise general knowledge of what ought to be". (Ibid., p. 1). Ethics is thus clearly focused on the categorical, on oughtness. Sidgwick is an "all-purpose" rationalist in that ethics must be worked out and made precise through human reason. He is not an extreme rationalist believing that reason is all there is.

Sidgwick believes that this kind of rational study of ethics can be carried out in a somewhat "neutral" fashion, in the sense that one need not be rationally pre-committed to a particular outcome in the analysis. But there is a conflict here. Any supposed neutrality can never be complete because it will conflict with the practical requirement that compels us to ethical thinking and action (ibid., p. 14). After all, a method, according to Sidgwick, is how to think about what is right (and wrong) to do. While Sidgwick believes that common sense morality has practical value and provides a bedrock for moral truth and practice, it is nevertheless imprecise and unclear in many respects. Rational analysis of ethics, therefore, must give precision and clarity to common sense morality so that ethics attains the position of a rational science. It must transcend common-sense moral thinking.⁴⁷ Here, the notion of science, as Sidgwick is using the term, is the looser 19th-century sense that was common at the time. But he did see the natural sciences as a paradigm case of how progress is achieved. Since Sidgwick works to delineate "fundamental principles" of ethics along intuitionist and utilitarian lines, and rejects both logical and systemic contradictions as negative tests for truth, his epistemology is appropriately classed as moderately foundationalist and coherentist (1907, p. 509). Sidgwick sometimes compares ethics to how geometry is worked out with axioms and derivations (ibid.). Sidgwick is moderate, given that the *Methods* focus on practical reason, what one "ought" to do, and how to determine right conduct. Finally, Sidgwick aims overall toward a "harmonious system" in his exposition of the methods of ethics, but he explicitly warns that he is not striving to forge a single, unified, harmonious systematic method (ibid., pp. 13–14, 496).

It is generally agreed that Sidgwick is accurately described as an ethical non-naturalist (Crisp 2015). But Sidgwick is no moral Platonist. He does not use the language of moral

properties or ontology and does not refer to any Third Realm or the like to elaborate his version of ethics. He is what today is termed a moral realist of the cognitivist sort (Sayre-McCord 1988b).⁴⁸ He rejects the notion that the “natural” can furnish an ethical first principle to work out a consistent metaethical system (Sidgwick 1962, p. 83).⁴⁹ He also rejects the notion that the ideal of Ultimate Good or Universal Happiness can be established naturalistically (1907, p. 396). Sidgwick takes naturalistic ethics to be inadequate in at least two respects. First, all versions run afoul of what he takes to be the fundamental is/ought distinction. The categorical “ought” cannot be derived from any collection of natural particulars, nor can ethical ideals be similarly established. Second, the various naturalistic proposals each have their particular problems that lead Sidgwick to reject them (Phillips 2011, pp. 14–15; Crisp 2015, p. 11, nt. 18).⁵⁰

However, Sidgwick also rejects Theistically grounded ethics but for different reasons (1907, pp. 504–7). Sidgwick’s relation to Theism is intriguing and ambivalent and merits a closer look. As is well known of Sidgwick, he resigned his fellowship at Cambridge in 1869 because of reservations concerning the requirement to assent to the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church in order to teach (Tribe 2017; Medema 2008).⁵¹ The 39 Articles were expressly orthodox in content and practice. Sidgwick’s resignation is often referred to as his turbulent “crises of faith”.⁵² But Sidgwick does not become an atheist, although he fits the profile of a secularist rather well.⁵³ He might best be described as an agnostic with leanings toward Theism, or a weak Theist with agnostic leanings.

On the one hand, Sidgwick concludes in the *Methods* that Theism cannot be established “on ethical grounds alone” (1907, pp. 506–7). Most theists would agree. On the other hand, Sidgwick writes in personal correspondence in 1898 that “the need of Theism—or at least some doctrine establishing the moral order of the world—seems clear to me”.⁵⁴ Again, most Theists would agree. Sidgwick seems to be gesturing toward a version of Providential Theism.

Along with rejecting orthodoxy, he also saw that Paley’s natural theology and moral philosophy had pretty much exhausted itself by the mid to late 19th century. It was no longer interesting and compelling for many thinkers. Again, most theists would agree. So Sidgwick is fully committed to and engaged in the secular moral project. We previously noted that Sidgwick sought to establish ethics as an autonomous discipline with distinctive non-theological first principles rationally derived. This goal partly forms the basis for his acceptance of intuitionism (Skelton 2010).⁵⁵ Sidgwick concluded that intuitionism and utilitarianism, thought by most to be in conflict, could be reconciled. But he also sought to reconcile individual personal happiness (egoistic hedonism/self-interest) with ultimate collective happiness (utilitarianism/duty to others) as an ideal of ethics.⁵⁶ However, he finally concluded that these two methods of ethics could not be rationally reconciled. If a person acts in self-interest, this might be rational. If a person acts for the greater happiness of others, this, too, might be rational. Sidgwick concluded that no unified universal, categorical “ought” could be synthesized between these two principles. Though not always, but sometimes, these two methods will necessarily conflict. For Sidgwick, this is more than a moral conflict, intellectual tension, moral difficulty, or philosophical paradox. He describes it as an “ultimate and fundamental contradiction” of intuition and judgment that informs practical reason and, along with such a contradiction, the attendant failure of a non-contradictory, rational ethical theory.⁵⁷ This was a final and severe blow to Sidgwick’s systematic aspirations. Sidgwick’s conception of practical rationality is that it provides complete and conflict-free guidance (Holley 2002).⁵⁸ Therefore, as is Sidgwick’s notoriety, he ends up with the contradictory and intractable “dualism of practical reason”. This dualism he takes to be a rational contradiction at the heart of his ethical system that he cannot resolve within his exclusive humanist and rationalist commitments. Sidgwick judges the implications of this to be severe. He even admits that this contradiction threatens to open “the door to universal skepticism” (1907, p. 509). He never gave in to such skepticism. He concludes the final edition of the *Methods* this way:

I do not mean that if we gave up the hope of attaining a practical solution of this fundamental contradiction, through any legitimately obtained conclusion or postulate as to the moral order of the world, it would become reasonable for us to abandon morality altogether: but it would seem necessary to abandon the idea of rationalizing it completely. . . . If then the reconciliation of duty and self-interest is to be regarded as a hypothesis logically necessary to avoid a fundamental contradiction in one chief department of our thought, it remains to ask how far this necessity constitutes a sufficient reason for accepting this hypothesis. This, however, is a profoundly difficult and controverted question, the discussion of which belongs rather to a treatise on General Philosophy than to a work on the Methods of Ethics: as it could not be satisfactorily answered, without a general examination of the criteria of true and false beliefs.⁵⁹

We must bear in mind that this is the mature Sidgwick writing here and not the Sidgwick of the oft-quoted concluding passage of the first edition of the *Methods* of 1864 that was effectively revised out of subsequent editions and never to reappear.⁶⁰ We can see in these final words that all of the things that have done good work for Sidgwick throughout the *Methods* now seem to work against him: his exclusive humanism, his rationalism, his utilitarianism, the autonomy of ethics, his quest for a unified and perfect ethical ideal, his inveterate precisionism, his thin providential Theism, and finally his sidelining of full-orbed Theism as integral to a completed metaethics. But in these final thoughts, he clearly states that, for ethics to be rational, there must be a reconciliation of the “fundamental contradiction” as a “logically necessary” hypothesis. In other words, reconciliation is achievable, but he does not know how. His gesture toward a solution from “General Philosophy” is hardly optimistic. The language of logical necessity here is strong indeed. Most contemporary Sidgwick interpreters think it is too strong⁶¹ and demurred on Sidgwick’s precisionist and perfectionist tendencies and how he frames the problem (Crisp 2015; Parfit 2011, vol. 1).⁶² But there is another way to see things.

Ironically, what Sidgwick actually discovered in his trek through the moral trees as he exits out of the moral forest was a version of the moral argument for the existence of God. So argue Baggett and Walls.⁶³ Notice how Sidgwick looks to the world’s moral order for a possible resolution. Theism could provide the basis for this order. Sidgwick saw this, as he stated in personal correspondence. Not, of course, the thin and exhausted Theism of Paley’s natural theology or the Victorian moralism of the day. “Full moral rationality requires an ontological ground of morality that, among other things, ‘guarantees’ an unbreakable connection between morality and the ultimate self-interest of all rational beings”.⁶⁴ This rationality must involve *both* God and reconciliation of the moral order in life after death, that is, in a world to come.⁶⁵ Can a full account of Theistic metaethics provide for such rationality? Ironically, Sidgwick’s *Methods* create an opening for just such a moral argument for God, but Sidgwick himself did not see a way to solidify the connections and ideas. While a Theistic relation to the moral order seemed intuitively evident to him, he could never work out a rationally clear account of the nature of that order within either a dogmatic Anglican orthodoxy or an exhausted Paleyan natural theology, both of which he rejected. But he also could not work out a final reconciliation of the dualism of practical reason within an entirely secular moral logic. For if such a logic failed of logical necessity, it thus failed of moral necessity.

For Sidgwick, there was nowhere else to go. He had come to an end of his resources. But clearly, Sidgwick still believed there was an objectively right and true answer to his quest. Yes, Sidgwick, who some consider the most significant moral philosopher of the 19th century, was fully committed to the secular moral project (Broad 1930).⁶⁶ But the methods of ethics could not be fully rationalized as Sidgwick had hoped. We can see then that this left his task unfinished and unfinishable, given his array of secular commitments and his particular formulation of ethics methods. As the generations invariably shifted toward the young and optimistic thinkers of the early 20th century, “old Sidg”, as Bertrand Russell

and other of his young students called him, died in 1900.⁶⁷ Much of his labor fades into obscurity.⁶⁸

6. G.E. Moore

One of these students was the young G. E. Moore (1873–1958). Moore was a student of Sidgwick's, and Moore's impact on 20th-century ethical thought beyond Sidgwick is indisputable. Contrary to popular belief, the publication of Moore's most well-known work, the *Principia Ethica*, did not rock the world of ethical philosophy in 1903 when it was first released (Moore [1903] 1993).⁶⁹ It wasn't until the 1930s that the influence and importance of Moore's primary work were widely recognized.⁷⁰ It is one of his earliest articles that gave him early fame—"The Refutation of Idealism", also published in 1903.⁷¹ Sidgwick's influence on Moore is evident throughout Moore's work.⁷² In the *Principia*, Moore trod well-worn paths, and many of his ideas were shared by his contemporaries.⁷³ However, this diminishes neither Moore's originality nor his impact. But it is important to put that impact in proper context regarding the history and thought that concerns us (Hurka 2003).⁷⁴

Moore's work was highly impactful for several reasons. The first is Moore's rhetorical style. The *Principia* first strikes one as crisp, succinct, to the point, laser-like, and exudes rhetorical confidence. It is laid out in what appears to be a powerfully logical format, and he looks to be proceeding succinctly and rigorously. This style is very different from other writing in philosophy at the time. For example, it contrasts sharply with Sidgwick's expository, wandering, wordy, heavy, and unconcise style (Eddy 2004; MacIntyre 1998).⁷⁵ In the preface of the first 1903 edition of the *Principia*, Moore asserts that the problem with virtually *all* past philosophies, and ethics in particular, is their need for more clarity in questions, answers, and analysis. Moore set out to rectify *all* these confusions of the past in the *Principia* (Moore [1903] 1993, pp. 33–37). Who would not be interested in a serious philosophical work that genuinely set all previous philosophers straight? The turn of the 20th century was rife with this kind of visionary optimism.

Secondly, like Sidgwick, Moore claims to be developing a "scientific ethics" in the sense of science common in the late 19th century (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 55). According to Moore, all previous ethical systems of thought before his work failed to achieve this status of a rigorous science of ethics (Willard 2018, p. 113). Moore spent much effort detecting errors and fallacies, defining terms, analyzing the language of ethics, and parsing the words being used, as well as the sentences, concepts, and ideas. This way of doing philosophy was part of the beginnings of the analytic tradition, with its linguistic turn, that still pervades much of technical philosophy today.⁷⁶ One can agree with Moore that the muddled use of language leads to muddled philosophy. But the analysis of language itself cannot yield a complete understanding of the moral domain, in whatever ways this domain is conceived. Ethics and values are more than language use. The central strategy was to get at the meaning of the ethical by analyzing the language of the ethical, which then, it was hoped, would enable one to clarify the concepts and content of ethics and thereby forge a science of ethics. For Moore, the central factor around which all ethical thinking revolved was that of intrinsic good (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 55). His central question was, "what is good?" Moore is not asking the question, "what is *the* good?", that is, the highest good in Plato's sense of the summum bonum, but rather, what is the nature of good itself as we use the term in our everyday moral language?⁷⁷ Put more precisely, how is good to be defined? And then how is this definition to be applied to the things we refer to as good and understand to be good? (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 57)⁷⁸ Moore believed that a science of ethics would be based on a precise and accurate conception of intrinsic good. He also carried forward the commitment to British utilitarianism as well as intuitionism, but he argued that good is the fundamental principle of ethics, and the definition of good is the central question of ethics. So then, according to Moore, the notion of right is derivative from that of good. Good makes an action right and not the reverse. In Moore's day, the analysis of properties had not been

developed thoroughly in philosophy, so Moore's analysis of moral properties and ontology is very limited in scope. He also never technically deploys the notion of supervenience, a development that later ethical thinkers will find almost indispensable to conceptualize the metaphysics of the moral domain.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, he argues that good is not a natural property, nor is it a supernatural property. He thus rejects both ethical naturalism and ethical Theism. He claims instead that good is an indefinable, irreducible, simple, intrinsic, and nonnatural property (Moore [1903] 1993, pp. 60–61; Moore 1962, pp. 89–100). This notion of a nonnatural property was both interesting and intriguing. Strangely, it looked like Platonism but was curiously different than classical Platonism (Moore [1903] 1993, pp. 227–31). Yet precisely how this notion was to be taken became a thorny issue that carried over into subsequent debates and remains disputed in current debates.

Thirdly, Moore utilized two argumentative strategies in particular to make his point that good is a nonnatural property. He dubbed the two centerpiece arguments in the *Principia* the "open question argument" and the "naturalistic fallacy" (Willard 2018, pp. 116–17).⁸⁰ These two things and the question of non-naturalism were particularly disputed. Clarifying these matters absorbed much of the efforts of the first half of 20th-century secular moral philosophy (see Prichard 1912; Frankena 1950; Broad 1930; Ross 1930, 1939; Geach 1956).⁸¹ It is generally agreed that the naturalistic fallacy is no formal fallacy (Sinclair 2019),⁸² that the open question argument is formally invalid but interesting and sometimes useful,⁸³ and that Moore's way of conceptualizing a nonnatural property contributed to many unfruitful controversies that plagued 20th century secular moral philosophy (Baldwin 2003; Darwall et al. 1992; Scott Soames 2005; Miller 2013; A Warnock 2007).⁸⁴ The issues are still discussed today, and the notion of a secular non-naturalist metaethics has recently been revived with full force (see Enoch 2013; Shafer-Landau 2005; Wielenberg 2014; Huemer 2008; Kulp 2017, 2019, and, critical of this trend, see Baggett and Walls 2016; Kratt 2023; Parrish forthcoming).⁸⁵ There are few defenders of the naturalistic fallacy or the classical open question argument as Moore formulated these concepts, but there has been a revival of secular moral non-naturalism (Regan 2003; Tucker 2018).⁸⁶

Fourthly, at the time that Moore wrote, it was believed that Moore had achieved a knockout argument against ethical naturalism, that he had actually refuted it. It indeed appeared so. Moore states his rejection of ethical naturalism in no uncertain terms throughout the *Principia* (Moore [1903] 1993, pp. 70–71). And if Moore had actually achieved a knockout argument against ethical naturalism, then that would have stood as a significant philosophical achievement (Sturgeon 2003).⁸⁷ If the naturalistic fallacy and open question argument fail to hold, and nonnatural moral properties remain mysterious, Moore's case against naturalism is greatly diminished.⁸⁸

Finally, what of the legacy of Moore's work (Horgan and Timmons 2006)?⁸⁹ Mary Warnock argues convincingly that the *Principia* dealt the final death blow to grand metaphysical theories of ethics, particularly those of Idealism. Moore's rhetorical style also had a significant effect.⁹⁰ But he had many second thoughts about the ideas in the *Principia*, as the preface to the second edition (1922; see also Baldwin 2010) shows.⁹¹ Moore reflectively described the *Principia* as "full of mistakes and confusions".⁹² But he still held that intrinsic good was not identical to any natural or supernatural property.

Nevertheless, in his well-known "A Reply to My Critics", he acknowledges that his characterization of naturalism seemed to him now (1942) "silly and preposterous". He also admits, "I agree, then that in *Principia* I did not give any tenable explanation of what I meant by saying that 'good' was not a natural property".⁹³ He also acknowledged that his notion of an intrinsic property was vague and unclear.⁹⁴ So then, if the three central theses of the *Principia* do not stand and Moore's characterization of naturalism, against which he is predominantly arguing, is admittedly fuzzy, there is little of Moore's ethical philosophy that remains standing.⁹⁵

But there is another big worry which Dallas Willard points out in Moore's *Principia* that is typically ignored by friend and foe alike.⁹⁶ Relating to right conduct, after providing

a long list of impossible consequential qualifications to evaluate right conduct, Moore concludes that “(w)e *never* have any reason to suppose that an action is our duty”.⁹⁷ Willard rightly takes this to be an eye-popping, concussive conclusion. He further points out that Moore never retracts this view; instead, he reinforces it in his summary and conclusion on right conduct that follows.

So then, Moore’s vaunted boldness in 1903 in aiming to correct all the philosophical errors of the past is now laid bare in his honest and unpretentious admissions of philosophical incoherence and confusion on key details. If the past of ethical philosophy was fuzzy in 1903, it is even less clear or certain after Moore. In Moore’s defense, one must acknowledge that the issues he works through are quite difficult. Nevertheless, after the *Principia*, the secular moral project is reeling, trying to find its footing and sense of direction. The impact of the *Principia* propels the secular moral project in several different directions. God is nowhere an option for Moore or any of the other secularists. Theistic thinkers did not significantly interact with Moore’s work. In 1907 Hastings Rashdall, a lucid theistic ethical thinker of the early 20th century, remarks in the preface to *The Theory of Good and Evil: A Treatise on Moral Philosophy* that the work of Moore (1903) came too late for him to incorporate it into his newly published volumes (1907).⁹⁸ William Sorley does mention Moore in a couple of places in his work but with no significant interaction, since Moore’s work completely ignores the question of God in relation to good, right, and the ethical. In the early 1940s and 50s, a little-known thinker, C.S. Lewis, no technical philosopher, gives his radio lectures in Britain that are later published on the moral argument for the existence of God. Moore is never acknowledged. To this day, Lewis’s works remain readable and compelling classics of moral argument and analysis.⁹⁹ As a former atheist turned Theist, Lewis clearly perceived his day’s intellectual and ethical vacuum and responded to it accordingly.

In the broader academic context of the period, two primary heirs of Moore’s ethical thinking are the emotivists and the intuitionists of the 1930s and beyond.¹⁰⁰ Intuitionism breaks some new positive ground, while emotivism devolves into the position that ethical (and theological) propositions contain nothing truly factual but only reflect a person’s feelings of approval or disapproval toward ethical matters.¹⁰¹ By mid-century (1949), Stewart Hampshire laments the fact that moral philosophy has lost its way, (Hampshire 1949). Roderick Firth complains that just about every form of ethical analysis has been tried with no agreement, only more details and fragmentation (Firth 1952), and Elizabeth Anscombe in 1958 demands a halt to all moral theorizing until further developments in the human sciences can accommodate a theoretical moral consensus (Anscombe and Margaret 1958).¹⁰²

At present, the *secularism* of the moral project is the dominant view of the Academy in metaethics. Secularism has institutional clout. However, it is distributed throughout a dizzying cacophony of differing metaethical theories and proposals. The common denominator is the rejection of explicit Theism. Naturalistic ethics continue to have a powerful influence on secular ethics, but new-wave secular moral non-naturalism is certainly in an ascendant position. Theistic metaethics is also a reemerging position, as we have briefly shown, and the moral argument for the existence of God is charting new territory with or without recognition by secularists. However, the secular moral project has not abated since Mill, Sidgwick, Moore, and beyond, and 21st century secular metaethics shows no signs of diminishing. Engaging with this wide and diverse panoply of secular thinkers and the secular moral project is one of the most urgent features of the resurgent Theistic moral project. Theistic moral philosophers are clearly required to undertake their work, given the conditions and challenges of secularization. Going forward, however, both secularist and Theistic thinkers in metaethics will have to develop a more comprehensive metaphysics of Reality that enables them to fill in and adequately support their metaethical thinking. In this author’s opinion, for both the secular and Theistic moral projects, this is where the most pressing philosophical and theological challenges lie for metaethics.

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Notes

- ¹ (Baggett and Walls 2019, pp. 8–19) Baggett and Walls point out the contributions to moral thinking from Augustine (354–430), Aquinas (1225–1244), Descartes (1596–1650), Pascal (1632–1662), Locke (1632–1704) and Reid (1710–1796) prior to Kant. They summarize the moral arguments for God that Kant put forward in this way. Better than anyone, Kant recognized the power and authority of the moral law. On that foundation he constructed two variants of the moral argument. 1. His argument from grace pertains to whether or not the moral life is possible. Morality requires us to achieve a stand too demanding to meet on our own. Divine assistance is needed to close the resulting gap. So rationality dictates that we postulate God’s existence. 2. Kant’s argument from providence pertains to the aforementioned rational need for happiness and virtue to cohere. Full rational commitment to morality requires that morality is a rationally stable enterprise, which entails the ultimate correspondence between virtue and (both individual and corporate) fulfillment. Without God’s existence there is no particularly good reason to think such correspondence obtains. So rationality dictates the postulation of God’s existence (*ibid.*, p. 33).
- ² Baggett and Walls, *ibid.*, pp. 66–71. The focus of Balfour’s argument was against ethical naturalism and its inadequacies as contrasted with Theism. C.S. Lewis noted in 1962 that Balfour’s *Theism and Humanism* strongly influenced him; see the excellent work, Arthur James Balfour and Michael W. Perry, *Theism and Humanism: The Book That Influenced C.S. Lewis*, New, Enhanced edition. (Balfour and Perry 2000).
- ³ Sorley’s very early critique of the ethics of naturalism is notable. Of the later work of Sorley’s, Baggett and Walls comment that it is “. . . perhaps the most sophisticated development of the moral argument for God’s existence before the present time”. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- ⁴ De Burgh deploys a cumulative case in which he combines the cosmological and teleological argument with the moral argument for God’s existence. See Baggett and Walls. *Ibid.*, p. 133. See also (Sessions 1985). Sessions provides good historical context and analysis for De Burgh’s moral argument.
- ⁵ Lewis has been the most widely read and influential writer of the moral argument in the 20th and 21st centuries. *Mere Christianity* continues to gain in popularity. It has sold over 3.5 million copies since the early 2000s.
- ⁶ Breitenbach is correct in judging the impact of Kant’s moral argument. He observes that “Kant’s argument made an impact on the landscape of moral philosophy by forcing those who came after him to consider what implications atheism would have for the rationality of following the moral law”. Zachary Breitenbach (2021), “Evaluating the Theistic Implications of the Kantian Moral Argument that Postulating God Is Essential to Moral Rationality”, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2: 149.
- ⁷ See (Dougherty et al. 2018, p. 447) In this interview Alvin Plantinga states that he thinks the moral argument for God’s existence to be “the most compelling”.
- ⁸ As Alastair MacIntyre puts the matter, “To be a theist is to understand every particular as, by reason of its finitude and its contingency, pointing towards God. . . . It is to believe that, if we try to understand finite particulars independently of their relationship to God, we are bound to misunderstand them” (MacIntyre 2011, p. 23).
- ⁹ This author has recently completed a PhD dissertation (2023) entitled *A Theistic Critique of Secular Moral Nonnaturalism* © that fully critiques the secular moral Platonism of David Enoch, Russ Shafer-Landau, Eric Wielenberg, Michael Huemer and Christopher Kulp. The dissertation also develops a distinctive version of the moral argument for the existence of God.
- ¹⁰ For that matter, it could also be polytheistic, or pantheistic, to point out some other options. As Dallas Willard rightly points out, “nonnaturalism has been the rule and not the exception in ethical theory”. (Willard 2018, p. 114).
- ¹¹ Many of the books of these thinkers grew out of a presentation of the Gifford lectures. The Gifford Lectures were established in 1887 to focus on issues related to natural theology. God and the moral order has been a central theme in natural theology.
- ¹² The first order moral, ethical and the normative are taken to be roughly equivalent throughout this article.
- ¹³ (Taylor 2007, p. 25) Taylor takes almost 900 pages to work out this question.
- ¹⁴ Taylor also notes the move to atheism by the intermediary stage of deism, *ibid.*, p. 293.
- ¹⁵ I am using this as a socio-cultural concept and not a metaphysical possible worlds concept.
- ¹⁶ As Taylor describes this, “(the) buffered self is the agent that no longer fears demons, spirits, magic forces”. *Ibid.*, p. 135. See also his discussion on pp. 300–1.
- ¹⁷ This “frame” is part of what he terms “secularity 3”, which is “not usually, or even mainly a set of beliefs which we entertain about our predicament”, but instead “the sensed context in which we develop our beliefs”. p. 549 (emphasis original).

- 18 Taylor refers to this as “one of the great achievements of our civilization, and the charter of modern unbelief”, p. 257.
- 19 Here, Taylor (p. 256) speaks of the “ontic placement” of this moral vision in human nature itself. For his notion of “fullness”: see pp. 600–1.
- 20 Taylor summarizes this on p. 305. MacIntyre similarly emphasizes this in his last chapter entitled “Contested Justices, Contested Rationalities” in (MacIntyre 1998).
- 21 Here, Parfit points out that the secular moral project is in its infancy and that Theism has been the natural home of ethics. As Parfit puts things, “Belief in God, or in many gods, prevented the free development of moral reasoning. Disbelief in God, openly admitted by a majority, is a recent event, not yet completed. Because this event is so recent, Non-Religious Ethics is at a very early stage”. Ibid., p. 456.
- 22 All of Mill’s writing can be accessed in 33 volumes; see Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, in 33 vols. | Online Library of Liberty (libertyfund.org, accessed 7 May 2017).
- 23 I have relied heavily in this section on David O. Brink’s thorough work on Mill as well as the excellent work by J.B. Schneewind on Mill and Sidgwick. See David O. Brink, “Mill’s Moral and Political Philosophy”, ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA, Fall 2022) John Stuart Mill, *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill: On Liberty, The Subjection of Women, and Utilitarianism* (NY: Random House, Modern Library, 2002); J.B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). For excellent overviews and analysis, see the two chapters in (Irwin 2011).
- 24 (Brink 2018, p. 3) The three most famous proponents of philosophical radicalism are Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), John Austin (1790–1859) and Mill’s father, James Mill (1773–1836).
- 25 (Mill 2002).
- 26 (Mill [1874] 1998).
- 27 Linda C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002); see also her summary Linda C. Raeder, “Mill’s Religion of Humanity: Consequences and Implications”, *Humanitas* 14, no. 2 (Mill 2001), pp. 4–34. Mill describes this religion of humanity as “the sense of unity with mankind, and a deep feeling for the general good, may be cultivated into a sentiment and a principle capable of fulfilling every important function of religion and itself justly entitled to the name” (Mill [1874] 1998, p. 109).
- 28 William Paley, *Natural Theology* (Miami: HardPress, 2017 [1802]). It should be noted that Paley was not a deist, he was clearly a Theist.
- 29 Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 167, 174. Here Mill critiques and accepts Paley’s argument from design. He argues that knowledge of design is only derived from things we already know as designed. Since we already possess experience of specific designed things, by induction they do serve as evidence for God as a designing intelligence. Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy*, p. 151 points out that beyond 1830 or so Paley’s influence begins to wane.
- 30 (Schneewind 1977, p. 177) Schneewind’s summary of Paley is quite useful, *ibid*, pp. 122–29. As Schneewind points out, Paley’s work was published in 1785 and was used as a textbook and reprinted many times. Bentham’s work on utilitarianism was published in 1789 and William Godwin also published a work in 1793. Neither of these works was as popular as Paley’s, *ibid.*, p. 127. See a more detailed discussion of this in (Rosen 2005, pp. 131–43). Rosen shows that in England there were many religious or theological utilitarians prior to Paley.
- 31 See a discussion of this in the section entitled, “William Paley as a Utilitarian”, in (Rosen 2005, pp. 131–43). Paley was a hedonist of sorts, but as a theist he placed emphasis on God rather than a strictly natural knowledge of right, wrong, good and evil and consequential good.
- 32 Aileen Fyfe, “The Reception of William Paley’s “Natural Theology” in the University of Cambridge”, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 30, no. 3 (September 1997): 321–35. Even Darwin was influenced by Paley, see (Thorvaldsen and Øhrstrøm 2013).
- 33 (Schneewind 1977, p. 178).
- 34 Quoted in (Schneewind 1977, p. 178).
- 35 The religious side of Mill is thoroughly documented in Timothy Larsen (2018), *John Stuart Mill: A Secular Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); see also Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* [Reprint] London, 1874, Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 1998. Mill rejected a providential, benevolent deism, p. 242. The only argument that Mill found inductively convincing for God was the argument from design, *ibid*, p. 174. But God according to Mill was finite as shown by the existence of evil in the world and the constraints of design, pp. 38–39, 177–83. Mill also rejected the notion of miracles, accepting Hume’s argument of unalterable natural law as conclusive, but did hold open the possibility that God could creatively intervene in the world, pp. 233, 244. Hence Mill was a Theist of sorts.
- 36 Frederick Rosen, *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill*, p. 131. Rosen lists six thinkers cited by (Crimmins 1998).
- 37 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. George Sher, 2nd ed. (IN: Hackett, 2001), p. 35. For a careful reconstruction of Mill’s argument and solid criticism of it, see (Brink 2018, pp. 34–39). MacIntyre simply calls Mill’s proof “unimpressive”. He thinks that it flounders on a haziness of the central concept. Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. 238–40.
- 38 Brink, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

- 39 This work will quote only from the 7th edition of the *Methods*, unless otherwise noted, as is common among interpreters of Sidgwick's work. Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. [1907] (London: Macmillan & Co, 1962). The work went through five printings and revisions in Sidgwick's lifetime. The last two versions were posthumous. This 7th edition also includes all of the prefaces from editions 1–7. This is very helpful for tracing the changes in Sidgwick's work and thinking.
- 40 (Harrison 1996) This is an excellent review of Sidgwick's reformist efforts in helping to found a first women's college near Cambridge, and other practical institutional reform efforts he was involved with. For these things, Harrison says of Sidgwick, "But if conventional answers were insufficient, he needed some kind of different and more theoretical guidance. He needed a theory of the "ought". He needed a Method of ethics". p. 427. Harris further describes Sidgwick not only as a reformer but also as a highly scrupulous "resigner", p. 437.
- 41 Ibid., p. 422.
- 42 (Sidgwick 1962, pp. 11–12).
- 43 Note that at this time psychology and sociology are also newly forming disciplines.
- 44 Parfit says of Sidgwick's *Methods* that it is the "best book on ethics ever written. . . Sidgwick's book contains the largest number of true and important claims". *On What Matters*, vol. 1:xxxiii.
- 45 Hence the plural *Methods of Ethics* and not the singular Method of Ethics.
- 46 (Sidgwick 1962) As Sidgwick puts it describing his intellectual journey away from Mill's utilitarianism toward his own formulation of utilitarianism, "I was then a Utilitarian again, but on an Intuitional basis". Preface to the 6th edition, xx.
- 47 (Sidgwick 1962) See chapter XI entitled "Review of Common Sense". See especially the conclusion pp. 360–61.
- 48 Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (1988a), "Introduction: The Many Moral Realisms", in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 1–23.
- 49 See also (Sidgwick et al. 1892; Sidgwick 1879).
- 50 Phillips, *Sidgwickian Ethics*, pp. 14–15; Crisp, *The Cosmos of Duty: Henry Sidgwick's Methods of Ethics*, p. 11, note 18.
- 51 For background to this period and the development of Sidgwick's view on religion see (Schneewind 1977, pp. 17–40). See also (Tribe 2017). Tribe provides additional useful context and background. The 39 Articles requirement was dropped as an academic requirement in 1871. See also (Medema 2008).
- 52 (Tribe 2017, p. 916) Tribe comments, "The Problem then is that Sidgwick's 'crises of faith' has been assimilated to a narrative of secularization created by intellectuals themselves skeptical of religious faith of any kind; which was certainly not Sidgwick's own position".
- 53 I disagree with Parfit who too quickly classes Sidgwick as an atheist, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 453).
- 54 (Sidgwick and Sidgwick 1906, p. 560) See also Sidgwick's discussion of freedom and what he terms "the moral government of the world". (Sidgwick 1962, p. 69).
- 55 (Anthony Skelton 2010) Skelton argues convincingly that Sidgwick's moral epistemology is intuitionist foundationalism.
- 56 (Sidgwick 1962, p. 498) Sidgwick defines happiness as "desirable consciousness" and universal happiness as "...desirable consciousness or feeling for the innumerable multitude of sentient beings, present and to come". (Sidgwick 1962, p. 404).
- 57 (Sidgwick 1962, p. 508) Sidgwick repeats this notion of "fundamental contradiction".
- 58 (Holley 2002, p. 51).
- 59 (Sidgwick 1962, pp. 508–9).
- 60 In this first edition of the *Methods*, Sidgwick concludes, "But the Cosmos of Duty is thus really reduced to a Chaos: and the prolonged effort of the human intellect to frame a perfect ideal of rational conduct is seen to have been foredoomed to inevitable failure". M1, p. 473. See also "Sidgwick's Pessimism", *Philosophical Quarterly* 26, no. 105 (Mackie 1976): pp. 317–27. This passage is quoted in full by Mackie and thoroughly discussed. In some respects Mackie finds in Sidgwick an ally to his own error theory. For a full account see (Mackie 1990).
- 61 I note that a reviewer questioned this assessment that Sidgwick's requirement of "logical necessity" is taken to be too strong. Indeed, this is the case. The footnote that follows documents this to be case for modern interpreters of Sidgwick.
- 62 (Crisp 2015; Parfit 2011; Phillips 2011; Holley 2002).
- 63 Baggett and Walls, *The Moral Argument: A History*; pp. 58–59; Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, pp. 243–69. In the first citation see the entire section on Sidgwick; in the second citation see chapter 8 entitled "Moral Rationality" that deals with C.S. Lewis, Sidgwick and Kant.
- 64 (Baggett and Walls 2016, p. 269) In this vein, Bart Schultz (2004) says of Sidgwick that he could not bear the idea that we lived in a universe where "...the wages of virtue might 'be dust'". *Henry Sidgwick, Eye of the Universe: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 15.
- 65 Breitenbach, "Evaluating the Theistic Implications of the Kantian Moral Argument that Postulating God Is Essential to Moral Rationality", p. 151.

- 66 C.D. Broad describes the *Methods* as “the best treatise on moral philosophy that has ever been written”. C.D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Tubner, 1930), p. 143; Parfit echoes this stating that the *Methods* is “the best book on ethics ever written”. Parfit, *On What Matters*, vol. 1, pxxxiii. Both, however, register the common complaint about its lack of conciseness.
- 67 The words that Sidgwick wanted to have said over his grave were, “Let us commend to the love of God with silent prayer the soul of a sinful man who partly tried to do his duty. It is by his wish that I say over his grave these words and no more”. (Sidgwick and Sidgwick 1906, pp. 598–99). He was instead given the traditional Anglican funeral with all its ritual and pronouncements. Bertrand Russell and others referred to Sidgwick as “old Sidg” and regarded him as a product of a bygone era. They regarded themselves as initiating a new era in thought and ideas.
- 68 Of course, we have the advantage of hindsight in evaluating Sidgwick’s thinking. We can see better where things go, where things end up and from where new things start. I think there are at least two important take aways from Sidgwick’s *Methods*. First, if moral/ethical debate occurs at the level of what we might call the middle range, the strictly practical range, applied ethics, there will be a great deal of consensus on matters, unless our practicality is informed by radically different metaphysics. Secondly, at some point, all practicality must link up with and be informed by a larger, even Ultimate metaphysics; that is, how all things Ultimately hang together in relation to fundamental ethical principles. It is here where the most substantive and difficult, but also, the most important. debates will be carried out. This is also the level of metaethics. It is here where the “why” and “how” of the moral/ethical is fundamentally grounded and worked out.
- 69 I will be quoting only from this edition of *Principia* unless otherwise noted. (Moore [1903] 1993) This is the standard work with additional notes and commentary.
- 70 (Baldwin 2003, p. 4) Much of this seems to be due to the detailed discussion of Moore in the works of W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ed. Philip Stratton-Lake, New edition. (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 1930); see also W. D. Ross, *Foundations of Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).
- 71 (Moore 1903) Baldwin also points out the importance of this early article of Moore’s, see Baldwin, *ibid.* See also Thomas Baldwin’s excellent account of Moore’s early dissertation work and the developmet of his ideas in “George Edward Moore”. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, pp. 1–16. Stanford, CA: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Summer 2010.
- 72 The *Principia* cites Sidgwick’s *Methods* more than any other work.
- 73 Even Rashdall complains in a footnote on the nature of the good. He details the fact that Moore’s way of seeing things is not at all new. In particular he references Plato. See Hastings Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil a Treatise on Moral Philosophy*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, Britian, 1907), vol. 1: 135–36.
- 74 Hurka’s exposition of the history and thinking shows many, if not most, of the ideas that Moore develops were put in place by earlier thinkers; especially Sidgwick (Hurka 2003).
- 75 (Eddy 2004) This rhetorical style harkens back to an earlier style of Newton, as opposed to Hume’s or Sidgwick’s style. This style Alasdair MacIntyre refers to as Moore’s “. . .method of calm assertion”. He continues, “More unwarranted and unwarrantable assertions are perhaps made in *Principia Ethica* than in any other single book of moral philosophy, but they are made with such well-mannered, although slightly browbeating certitude, that it seems almost gross to disagree. But what then is Moore’s case?” MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, p. 250.
- 76 The beginnings of analytic philosophy are generally attributed to Gottlieb Frege (1848–1925), Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), G.E. Moore (1873–1958) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Early on, Moore and Russell were collaborators but there seems to have been little to no interaction between Frege and Moore, although Moore acknowledged the influence of Wittgenstein; see Moore’s autobiography in (Schlipp 1968a, vol. 1, pp. 33–34).
- 77 It should be noted that Moore does include a discussion of ethical ideals that touches on the concept of good as an ethical ideal in the final chapter of the *Principia*. Moore and Baldwin, *Principia Ethica*, pp. 232–73.
- 78 As Moore states things, he says that “(t)he most important sense of ‘definition’ is that in which a definition states what are the parts which invariably compose a certain whole; and in this sense ‘good’ has no definition because it is simple and has no parts”. (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 61). Given this, it is widely recognized that Moore deploys a highly peculiar notion of the term definition throughout the *Principia* but also that this strategy of analyzing parts and wholes, today known as mereology, is really the strategy that Moore deploys throughout his work to analyze the concept of good.
- 79 Much more discussion on the subject of moral supervenience can be found in this author’s dissertation (Kratt 2023).
- 80 Willard, I think correctly and succinctly, identifies what Moore meant by the naturalistic fallacy, namely, the mistake of identifying one property with a property that is not identical to it. The open question argument specifies that all correct definitions of good do not create open questions, or a remaining question about goodness not specified in associated non-moral properties. For example, is pleasure good? This is an open question. If pleasure is good, then the question reduces to this—is good (pleasure) good? This open question shows that good is something other than pleasure. Good and pleasure are then not identical. Hence, Moore argued, “Good” is a distinguishable, intrinsic and non-natural property.
- 81 The article by (Pritchard 1912; Frankena 1950; Broad 1930).

- 82 For a book length treatment on various aspects of the naturalistic fallacy, see (Sinclair 2019) The issue is still of some philosophical interest.
- 83 (Horgan and Timmons 2006, p. 7) Horgan notes that toward "...the end of the twentieth century, we find that the open question argument is alive and well". For example, he points to its use in T.M. Scanlon's "buck passing" account of value. See (Scanlon 1998, pp. 95–100) Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay, "What's Right About the Open Question Argument", in *Themes from G. E. Moore: New Essays in Epistemology and Ethics*, ed. Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 261–82. (Nuccetelli and Seay 2008).
- 84 (Darwall et al. 1992; Baldwin 2003) For an excellent overview and analysis of Moore, see the section on Moore in Dallas Willard's, *The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge*. See also (Soames 2005; Irwin 2011) See also the relevant sections in Alexander Miller, *Contemporary Metaethics: An Introduction*, Second edition. (Malden: Polity Press, 2013); Mary Warnock, *Ethics Since 1900* (Mount Jackson, VA: Axios Press: Distributed by National Book Network, 2007).
- 85 See also this author's critical analysis of all these thinkers *A Theistic Critique of Secular Moral Nonnaturalism* © (2023) PhD dissertation, Liberty University.
- 86 The open question argument is still appealed to as refuting naturalistic forms of reductionism; see for example (Huemer 2008, pp. 67–72) Shafer-Landau defends the open question argument as "relevant". See also (Shafer-Landau 2005, pp. 57–58).
- 87 See also Nicholas L. Sturgeon (2016) "Naturalism in Ethics", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge). For a useful exposition of how Moore uses the notion of the naturalistic fallacy see (Gauthier 1967).
- 88 (Irwin 2011, p. 633) Here Irwin makes an important point as it relates to Moore's open question argument. He observes, "... if the appeal to an open question is legitimate, it shows that Good is not only undefinable, but also inexplicable". This leaves us effectively with no moral knowledge. See Irwin's excellent entire discussion.
- 89 The many debates spinning off from Moore's work can be sampled in (Horgan and Timmons 2006).
- 90 (Warnock 2007).
- 91 (Irwin 2011, pp. 639–41) See also (Moore 1962, p. 98).
- 92 (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 2). Moore stated in the same preface that a rewrite of the entire book was needed but that he was not able to undertake such a task.
- 93 (Schlipp 1968b, 2:582) See both volumes in this series for many well-known critical essays on Moore's ethics.
- 94 (Schlipp 1968b, 2:591).
- 95 Soames provides the most technical and detailed criticism of Moore's thinking. *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century. 1: The Dawn of Analysis*: 3–90.
- 96 (Willard 2018, p. 159) Emphasis original.
- 97 (Moore [1903] 1993, p. 199) Emphasis mine. This view is also reaffirmed in Moore's summary of his views on right conduct, *ibid*, pp. 229–31. Moore later states, "... an action ought to be done or is our duty, only where it produces *more* pleasure than any which we could have done instead". (Moore 2005, p. 15) Emphasis is the author's. The problems with this again seem obvious. See also *ibid*, p. 120 for a version of Sidgwick's dualism of practical reason juggernaut.
- 98 Hastings Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil a Treatise on Moral Philosophy*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, Britain, 1907) vii. (Sorley 1918).
- 99 (C.S. Lewis 1978, 2001; Baggett et al. 2008).
- 100 Intuitionism is most strongly represented by the work of W.D. (Ross 1930, 1939) Current versions of intuitionist nonnaturalism are discussed and criticized in detail in the author's Dissertation *A Theistic Critique of Secular Moral Nonnaturalism* ©.
- 101 Ayer (1936), *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications) 107. Ayer represents the movement known as logical positivism. Theological propositions are "meaningless" according to Ayer. The term emotivism is used by C.L. Stevenson (1937). By this term, Stevenson meant that ethical propositions expressed emotional attitudes that involved personal influence directed towards ethical matters. C.L. Stevenson (1944), "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", *Mind* 46, no. 181 (1937): 14–31; C.L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Emotivism is part of a larger turn in ethics that occurred after Moore and is referred to as ethical non-cognitivism. For a good introduction to this, see (Schroeder 2010).
- 102 Stuart Hampshire, "Fallacies in Moral Philosophy", *Mind*, 58, no. 232 (October 1949): 466–82; (Firth 1952; Anscombe and Margaret 1958; Hampshire 1949).

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