What Could Be a Basis for Objective Moral Truth?

There is an ongoing debate whether morality can be defined objectively or if it is simply relative to each individual. It seems more real than not that objective moral truths exist. These truths are either defined by some moral code of the universe or a supreme being and we ought to follow them because of their importance to humanity.

Something is considered a truth when it corresponds with how the world really is. Moral truths are truths that correspond with how we as human beings ought to act and behave towards one another because the form of the good exists.

The difference between moral relativism and moral objectivism is as follows: Moral relativism is where moral truth depends on what the individual believes, thinks, or feels. This is where right and wrong are determined based on culture, experiences, and what feels like the best decision to make. You can compare this attitude towards morality to liking different brands of clothing. No clothing brand is considered better or worse than the other except to the relative opinion of the individual or community. If someone says Nike is better than Adidas, they are not wrong, their opinion is relative and there is no absolute truth.

Moral objectivism is where moral truths can stand independently. They are absolute moral laws that ought to be followed because those laws determine what is right and wrong. Even if no one agrees with the law, it is just and true because it is universally true. You can compare this attitude towards morality to things that are true regardless of whether you believe in them or not. For instance, if someone says that drinking water helps keep you alive. Even if you don't believe in it, the water in your body is keeping you from dehydrating and potentially dying so this statement is universally true.

An inquiry that often comes up when discussing objective morality is where these moral objective truths could come from. One of the strongest arguments for an origin or basis of objective moral truths is the existence of a god or supreme being. If God exists, and he created the universe, then the laws that he set for the universe are true, by definition. Because we as humans are insignificant compared to such a being, we may not be able to comprehend such objective moral truths. But they exist, they are final, and they ought to be followed because those are the moral truths that God set for the universe.

However, I think that a deity is not required for objective moral truths to exist. If God was truly good, he ought to follow the moral codes of the universe. I like to think that the universe itself has objective moral laws that ought to be followed. Objective moral truths are essential and ought not to be defined by the whims of God.

It is argued that we cannot know whether something is objectively moral unless there is a supreme being telling us what is right and wrong. As of now, we cannot confirm nor deny the existence of such a being and it's pointless to try and understand what is objectively moral. I disagree with these statements. Although we may not be able to understand all objective moral truths, or ever be able to fully understand any of them at all, I think it is pessimistic to say that the only way objective moral truths can exist is through a supreme being that decides the rules. I

think it is far from pointless to try and understand the moral truths of the universe. Learning about these truths is essential to learning how we ought to behave and act towards one another.

Some also question that if objective moral truths exist, does God himself have to follow those laws, or is something good simply because God says it is? It seems as though the God of the Bible ought not to exist because "the content of morality would be arbitrary, dependent on God's whim. Though God has declared murder, theft, and debauchery wrong, it could have been otherwise had God willed it so." (Koukl) It would seem as though for God, there is no moral right or wrong. I agree with the statement that God ought not to decide on what is considered an objective moral truth. Those truths ought to exist, and God ought to follow them.

Instead of a deity making the laws of what is considered objectively immoral or moral, a basis of morality could be that the universe itself has objective moral laws that ought to be followed. Objective moral truths are intrinsically valuable. I like to think that this is the case, even if we cannot know what those universal moral laws are.

However, some claim that the laws of the universe are only scientific and measurable. Morality does not fall under this category as you cannot ground the knowledge of the objective morals themselves. Because science works on empiricism, it uses observations to determine truth or to verify theories. But moral claims are not verifiable or falsifiable through experiences or observations. There is a difference between the laws that are and that ought to be. No matter how you describe the universe, it doesn't prove one way or another what the moral facts are. They are set independently. I agree that you cannot mix the laws that are and what ought to be. And objective moral truths cannot be proven like a math equation or verified with any type of empirical evidence. But I like to take an optimistic standpoint where even if we cannot know the objective moral truths of the universe, we ought to still seek after them because we might be able to eventually understand them.

Viewing morality from an objective standpoint gives more value to life. Often when people view morality from an objective standpoint, it seems to give more meaning and value to living. If there are definite laws that determine what is right or wrong, following the morally right laws is the way we ought to live our lives. When chalked up to relativism, and personal preferences, we ought to do what feels good rather than what is good. This logic is at its core very self-centered and selfish behavior is not how we ought to live our lives. "When self-interest rules, it has a profound impact on behavior, especially how we treat other human beings. The notion of human dignity depends on there being objective moral truths. Instead, we can discard people when they become troublesome or expensive." (Randall) I agree with what Randall is saying here. Ultimately, how we ought to behave depends on there being objective moral truths.

Not only this, but striving towards the behaviors of objective moral truths allows people to improve themselves. When we look at the broad scope of things, we ought to improve ourselves with a goal in mind, something greater than what we already have or the way we already act. The ideal goal is the objective moral truth. With morality, if you look purely from a relative view, you can improve yourself, but it's much more difficult without an ultimate goal. In relativism, you change what your morals are based on how you think and feel. If you look at it from an objective standpoint, there is a goal. You can improve your morality by trying to reach

the truth, the true way to be a good person. For example, if a country begins providing equal rights for all genders/ethnicities, they are improving themselves, working towards a goal to bring forth more good in their country. The country didn't just change its moral standpoint, they improved it, and made it better and closer to the objective moral truth. I think we ought to keep the goal of reaching those objective moral truths in mind as we strive to be better people. There are also certain values that one can only truly participate in through the context of the existence of objective moral facts and the logic of objective moral beliefs. I like to think that I can only participate in certain things that hold meaning if I act unselfishly and view my actions as accountable to something beyond my will or judgment.

Some argue that not all scenarios ought to be ruled right or wrong according to the judgment of objective truths. Take for example the question: "Is it moral to torture a prisoner if there is a 1/1000 chance that he will reveal where a bomb is planted that will kill 100,000 people?" (Coyne) Objectively, we cannot know if the torture is wrong. In this case, torturing someone could save a large number of people. But if torture is objectively wrong, it does not seem good or morally correct to let all those people die when there was a possibility of a better outcome. If we cannot know what the objective moral truths are, then there is the possibility that there is no objective truth whatsoever. This is a very pessimistic view of objective morality that I do not agree with. I think that there are things that exist that we do not know yet, so I like to take a more optimistic stance. I'm hopeful that we can discover objective moral truths eventually.

It seems more real than not that objective moral truths exist. A basis for these objective moral truths could be some universal laws or laws set by some type of deity. Although objective moral truths cannot be proven empirically, they are intrinsically valuable and give people the opportunity to improve themselves.

(1) Coyne, Jerry. "Why There Is No Objective Morality." *Why Evolution Is True*, 24 July 2013, https://whyevolutionistrue.com/2013/07/24/why-there-is-no-objective-morality/.

(2) Koukl, Greg. "Euthyphro's Dilemma." *Euthyphro's Dilemma*, 7 Dec. 2012, https://www.str.org/w/euthyphro-s-dilemma-1.

(3) Randall. "Moral Truth." *AllAboutPhilosophy.org*, All About Philosophy, 22 Oct. 2020, https://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/moral-truth.htm.