

Baronett, *Logic* (4th ed.)
Chapter Guide

Chapter 12: Moral Arguments

Moral reasoning utilizes logic in the reconstruction of moral arguments, addition of missing premises, application of analogical reasoning, or in the evaluation of a moral argument for inconsistencies.

A. Value Judgments

Moral arguments enlist both descriptive and value judgments.

Descriptive judgments are statements that describe.

Value judgments are statements that reflect a belief in the value, worth, importance, or desirability of an object or a human action. Very often, value judgments are **prescriptive**, in that they assert that one should do or believe something. Just as often, value judgments are **normative**, in that they assert a standard for correct moral behavior or rules of conduct.

B. Moral Theories

There are many types of moral theories, but major theories can be classified as follows:

1. **Emotivism**: The theory that moral value judgments are merely expressions of one's attitudes or emotions.
2. **Consequentialism**: The theory that moral value is determined by the outcomes or consequences of actions.
 - a. **Teleology** is a type of consequentialism that asserts value can be determined by ascertaining the purpose of an object or action.
 - b. **Egoism** is a type of consequentialism which asserts that everyone should act in order to increase his or her own pleasure or happiness.
 - c. **Utilitarianism** is a type of consequentialism which asserts that moral value is determined by how much happiness is produced for the greatest number of people.
3. **Deontology**: A duty-based ethical theory that morality is determined by one's duty to others.
 - a. The first formulation of Kant's **Categorical Imperative** is the exemplar of deontological expressions: "Act only on that maxim that you can will at the same time to become a universal law."
4. **Relativism**: First, all moral value judgments are determined by a society's beliefs toward actions or behavior. Second, there are no objective or universal moral

value judgments. *Situation ethics*: The idea that we should *not* rigidly apply moral rules to every possible situation.

C. The Naturalistic Fallacy

Although it may be true that human beings naturally desire their own pleasure or happiness and naturally avoid pain, it does not follow that pleasure or pain *ought* to be pursued or avoided. Some moral theorists infer from the fact we do pursue pleasure and avoid pain that we ought to do so. (This is called the **naturalistic moral principle**.) Other moral theorists, the ones who argue that the inference is erroneous, accuse the naturalistic moral philosophers of committing **the naturalistic fallacy**.

D. The Structure of Moral Arguments

We can detect a moral argument when we have an argument that contains:

1. at least one premise describing a particular situation where a decision to act will be made by someone;
2. at least one premise that supplies a moral rule, principle, or command; and,
3. a conclusion asserting that a specific action should be performed.

E. Analogies and Moral Arguments

Analogical reasoning appears in every type of reasoning, including moral arguments. It functions the same way in moral arguments as it does elsewhere, except the conclusion involves a moral judgment. Typically, the comparison involves a morally neutral object or event and the moral object or event of the conclusion. Lastly, analogical reasoning is often the vehicle for moral arguments because they do a good job of pointing out inconsistent moral views or behaviors.