

Ad Guminiski

James A. Cook

I want to begin by saying thanks to Arnold T. Guminiski for taking time to respond to my earlier paper and for *his generosity* in allowing me to have the last word in this brief conversation. Not everybody will allow that and I don't take it for granted. In that same spirit I want to say that though I have the last word *in this forum*, I do not want to leave the impression that I think this is the final word he or I might have on this subject. I have not played all my philosophical cards on the subject in either of my papers and it is likely he has not either. But by common agreement this reply will end our exchange.

Arnold T. Guminiski objects to my previous assertions that his first paper did not provide good enough evidence to support any of his major contentions and he believes that I have misconstrued his first paper in several important respects. He also feels my earlier response to his paper affords him the opportunity “to better explain (his) views to (me)...”¹ It seems best in this reply to first look at and respond to the explanations and clarifications he makes in his second paper in roughly the order in which he addresses them. That is, first and most important, I will examine what Guminiski has to say about the merits of Craig, Moreland and Copan's particular moral argument in his reply to me.²

Next I will devote a parenthetical section of my reply to Guminiski's allegation that I misconstrued certain of his earlier arguments; then I will finish the paper by taking up the issues of 1) conflation and 2) the practical consequences of the particular moral argument as he discusses in his reply.

Section #1

Apparently Guminiski thinks that I did not treat the moral argument in my earlier paper *as* a hypothetical situation. That is, he apparently thinks in some sense I “fought the problem” or treated it non-hypothetically.³ His evidence for that claim is that I “expressed dissatisfaction with my (his) exposition of what constitutes Conservative Metaphysical Naturalism because (Guminiski) failed to show that the same is coherent and plausible.”⁴ He apparently thinks that if it was presented hypothetically as a stand-alone argument, it was not necessary to show the plausibility of Conservative Metaphysical Naturalism (CMN) in order to show the success of his project—that is in

¹ Arnold T. Guminiski, “A Reply to James A. Cook's Response to My Moral Argument Paper,” p. 1. This paper is available on-line at www.theologyforum.net (click on “media” and then “papers”).

² As a matter of fact the bulk of our discussion has centered on the moral argument as expounded by William Craig and J.P. Moreland in their book, *The Philosophical Foundations for a Christian World View*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press).

³ Guminiski's use of the expression, “fight the problem,” is not familiar to me and the best I can make of what he means is that I treated it in some sense non-hypothetically. Also, I had assumed that the sense in which Guminiski was treating Craig and Moreland's argument hypothetically was in the sense that Craig and Moreland had presented their argument in the *context* of other natural theological arguments such as the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments and he was treating their moral argument hypothetically as if it were isolated from *that* context.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

showing that the particular moral argument of Craig, Moreland and Copan is unsound. This is an important point and I will come back to this issue later in this section.

It might be helpful at this stage to stand back and address some preliminary issues that will hopefully make our conversation clearer. First, it is important to remember that in my response to Guminski's first paper I contended that he had not *shown in his paper* that Moreland, Craig, and Copan's moral argument—even in the stand alone form—failed. Further, as I described in my earlier paper, he did not discuss exactly what it meant for an argument to fail (or succeed) and that, I think, is important in more than one respect. First, there can be a sort of ambiguity regarding the use of the terms “fail” and “succeed” with respect to different kinds of arguments because not everybody agrees on just how they are to be properly applied (if at all) to different types of arguments, be they deductive, inductive, or abductive. For example, to say a particular *inductive* argument failed and that a particular *deductive* argument failed is not to mean they failed in exactly the same way. Their failure or success depends on differing criteria. In short, it is wise to keep your eye on any changes to the rules of the game, especially if arguments are re-cast into new forms, and especially when it comes to deciding whether the “new” arguments fail or succeed.

A second kind of ambiguity can be identified with regard to the use of “fail” and “succeed” because certain arguments can “fail” for one person but not for another. That is, certain *non-deductive* (that is, other than logical demonstration) arguments can be considered successful or cogent and even in a sense sound because they resonate with a particular person's background beliefs and effectively persuade—that is to say the argument can be understood as subjectively sound or successful, while at the same time the same argument fails with others because they do not so resonate. So any discussion of whether arguments fail or succeed will benefit by taking into account at least these two important distinctions. These points are important because 1) Guminski and I agree that Craig and Moreland are **not** attempting to provide a logical demonstration of God's existence from their moral argument, and 2) Craig and Moreland did define what they meant by a successful and sound argument and in Guminski's reply to me he appears to understand and accept Craig and Moreland's criteria⁵.

Because of the above named ambiguities associated with those terms I did find it difficult to understand just exactly how Guminski was using these terms in his *first paper* (and said so) and thus had difficulty in precisely understanding why Guminski thought their argument failed. Despite that I attempted to piece together from that earlier paper just what were his reasons for holding his position—evidently to his dissatisfaction. But the good news is that he has clarified, to *some* extent, these issues in his reply and it is to *that* reply I now turn.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3. The thing to see is that Guminski concedes that a sound argument, according to Craig and Moreland, has premises “that are *more plausible* than their contradictories or denials” (emphasis mine), p. 3. I assume Guminski does accept this gauntlet, indeed the context of his discussion on p. 3 seems to indicate he positively does accept this sense of sound and unsound in the context of evaluating their argument.

Guminski asserts the following argument is the one that fails as a sound deductive argument:

- (1.) If God did not exist, objective moral values would not exist.
- (2.) Objective moral values do exist.
- (3.) Therefore, God exists.

It is my interpretation that Guminski denies Premise (1) of the argument above—he does accept Premise (2), and it follows that he therefore denies the conclusion. That is to say the existence of objective moral values does not provide support for theism.

But in his reply to my response, Guminski states that “[given] the nature of the stand-alone argument, it was unnecessary for my purposes to burden my paper with a defense of what I defined as among the principle tenets of CMN.”⁶ However, this important claim seems to be mistaken as I will argue below. Guminski has conceded that Moreland and Craig have defined soundness in terms of the *plausibility* of their argument (which implies taking in to consideration the plausibility of its premises along with other things) *relative* to the *plausibility* of the arguments that deny the conclusion (which implies the consideration of the plausibility of its premises) and he takes no issue with that. But that means in order for Guminski to show that their moral argument is unsound *he must show* that their premises are either contradictory and therefore maximally implausible or less plausible than their denials.

Now especially in the case of natural theological arguments as framed by Craig and Moreland (and natural atheological arguments framed similarly, too), showing the plausibility (or perhaps the comparative plausibility) of a conclusion for an argument may involve both 1) as suggested above, a judgment about its plausibility that may critically depend on one’s background beliefs and that may lead to 2) a judgment about its plausibility that may depend on the whole plausibility of one’s metaphysical perspective. That is to say for Craig and Moreland the plausibility of natural theology (and natural atheological) arguments and in particular the plausibility of the moral argument is person relative.

But has Guminski taken up any explicit consideration of these highly relevant issues? What we do see is that he denies any need to discuss the plausibility of CMN (his metaphysical perspective) in this context.⁷ But in so doing I think he has cut himself off from any ability to claim *he has shown* his denial of Premise (1) is more plausible than its affirmation. It follows that *he has not shown that Craig and Moreland’s argument—even in the stand-alone form—is unsound in the terms set forth by Craig and Moreland..* And since he has not discussed the sense in which an argument can be sound or unsound relative to one’s background beliefs, *he has further not shown* that other holders of *even* CMN cannot be persuaded by Craig and Moreland’s moral argument. Indeed I think

⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷ Ibid., p. 2. Guminski says, “Given the nature of the stand-alone argument, it was unnecessary for my purposes to burden my paper with a defense of what I defined as among the principal tenants of CMN.”

some holders of CMN could be properly persuaded by Moreland's argument...even in the stand-alone form.

Guminski may protest that I have not given sufficient attention to consideration of *his* procedural rule in evaluating the stand-alone form he created. One can see more clearly in his reply than in his first paper that it is the procedural rule that is doing the heavy lifting, philosophically speaking. I will come back to this in a moment.

This basic issue of considering the plausibility of Craig's and Moreland's argument (and their denials) comes up in several ways, for instance when he discusses his alleged correction of Argument A in my first paper. After restating his points explicitly on the bottom of page 2 and onto page 3 of his reply, he concludes that, "Therefore, (5) the moral argument fails for both the conservative metaphysical naturalist and the traditional monotheist **who agree with respect to the foregoing premises** (emphasis mine)."⁸ But why *should* they or anyone agree with his foregoing premises or the conclusion which purportedly follow from them? They are certainly not self-evidently true premises. Indeed, on the face of it, they are no more self-evident to all rational people than Craig's and Moreland's are. Comparative consideration of the premises of the two arguments is where the argument for plausibility begins—not ends.

Take another example: Guminski says, "Since Cook agrees that it is possible for God to create a world in which the natural moral law and its proximate ontological foundation obtain in the ordinary course of nature, it seems to me that Cook should conclude the stand-alone argument fails (prescinding, of course, from all nonmoral arguments and the deliverance of special revelation)."⁹ But there is a significant difference between conceding that it is *possible* for God to create such a world and that therefore there *could* be such a world and saying the current world in which we live is more *plausibly* a world with objective morality without God than a world with objective morality in which there is God. Possible may not be plausible, especially relative to one's background beliefs.

Think about it, if the stand-alone argument of the type Guminski proffers is a *form* that implies one could *not* legitimately appeal to the plausibility of the premises of the arguments in consideration, no stand-alone argument would work that appealed to the plausibility of the argument and premises, *not just the stand-alone moral argument*. This suggests the problem is not in the moral argument itself, but in the *form of the argument* as proposed by Guminski. This move by Guminski would have been easier to detect if in his first paper he had explicitly stated the version of moral argument he was criticizing, as he did in his reply, and stated explicitly and more clearly that what *he meant* by the stand-alone form is that it implied that the plausibility of the argument and its premises could not be considered.¹⁰ That would have made what he was doing more obvious and that such a move is illegitimate.

⁸ Ibid., p.3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The key thing to see is that Moreland and Craig are presenting their moral argument in the context (in their book) of other natural theological arguments including the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments. It is from *these* non-moral arguments (and their alleged credibility) that I presumed that

It is illegitimate because such a way of setting up the argument concurs at the front end to rules of the game that are taken away at the end. In this case Guminski appears to first agree that plausibility is the way to decide whether the argument succeeds or fails, but then he invokes a procedural rule that eliminates recourse to that analysis. It reminds me of that favorite school yard game that was played with those who would allow it, “Heads I win, tails you lose.”¹¹

Another way to see the arbitrary nature of this procedural rule is to ask if Craig and Moreland’s argument is not an attempt for a logical demonstration (and Guminski has agreed that it is not), then how would you determine the soundness of their argument other than examining the plausibility of it (and the plausibility of its premises) compared to the plausibility of its denial?¹² And wouldn’t atheological arguments, if they complied with Guminski’s rule, fail too? It would seem that they would.

Instead of invoking a procedural rule to regulate out of the discussion the plausibility issues, I think Guminski should have claimed that Craig’s and Moreland’s argument was not sound for *him* and possibly others whose background beliefs might not resonate with their premises (or what were implied by those premises). That would have properly fit Craig’s and Moreland’s gauntlet. Of course, in so doing he would have to concede that there would likely be other people, even holders of CMN, who might hold background beliefs that upon reflection resonate *better* with Craig and Moreland’s premises and thereby find their argument sound. That would mean that their argument could also succeed! But since Guminski did not distinguish between *that* sense of the possible subjective failure and success of the argument, he did not really accomplish what he set out to do, which was to show that the argument was unsound, period.

As a result I stand by my previous verdict that Guminski has not legitimately *shown* the central claim of his paper, that Craig and Moreland’s moral argument *is* unsound.

Guminski wanted to isolate the moral argument when he created his stand-alone form. But I now see more clearly that when he qualifies his stand-alone form in the following manner, “(prescinding, of course, from all nonmoral arguments and the deliverances of special revelation)” that he is intending to foreclose *any discussion of the plausibility* of the premises of his or Craig’s argument. I will later comment on how legitimate I think this move is.

¹¹ Now I don’t think Guminski constructed this procedural rule to consciously gain an apologetic advantage. More likely, it seems to me, that he did not fully realize what he was doing when he treated their moral argument hypothetically as a stand-alone one. But what he was doing by conceptualizing and employing his procedural rule was *significantly* changing the rules of the game set up by Moreland and Craig whereby we were to evaluate the soundness of their argument. That is to say, I think Guminski did not realize he was going to be begging the question in setting things up the way he did.

¹² Ruling out, via the procedural rule, evaluation of the plausibility of the premises and all that is implied by that has enormous impact. Strictly speaking if one *does not consider the plausibility of the premises of their arguments (and vice versa)*, it follows by this strategy, that not only is their stand-alone form unsound, but also their more global argument (what I think Guminski calls the moral plus argument). All one would have to do is state a denial of their premises and *say* that those who agree with those denials are what it takes to have *shown* that their argument fails—which sounds a bit too easy. In fact it is so easy, by making this move more explicit from the outset, Guminski could have saved himself about 25 pages in his original presentation and blown both the stand-alone *and* the global moral arguments out of the water.

Section #2

Now I could have skipped this parenthetical section because in his reply to my response, which I discussed above, the clarified argument he gives does not really work—or at least so I say. But also I do *not* find myself agreeing with his other assessment that I have largely misunderstood him in several arguments in his first paper or that, necessarily, it was *my fault* that I misunderstood him where I did. His numerous, and what I sometimes thought were overstated allegations, motivate me to want to set the record straight about that. Feel free to skip this section because it does not really add much additional light to the central issue of his paper as analyzed in the previous section.

i.

On page 2 Guminski quotes the *conclusion* and *one premise* of my Argument A and asserts that this is not one of his arguments.¹³ Besides the fact that the conclusion and one of the premises of my argument are not *my* argument either, it would have been much more helpful to see which premises of my reconstruction of his argument he thought I got wrong and particularly *just how I misapprehended the nature of his argument*.

What I did get from him in his reply was a restatement of his argument in more explicit terms, but that argument looks pretty much like what I had to say. For example, he could have helpfully said, “This is what Cook missed in his reconstruction of what I had to say and this is how the proper construction of my argument leads to my conclusions.” As a result it is hard for me to see even in his later reply to me *how* or *that* I got him wrong. What I do now think I got wrong was not his argument (which I called Argument A) but rather I did not see he was using his procedural rule in the unusual and unexpected manner in which he was—that is, using it to rule out reference to the plausibility of the arguments. Frankly, in light of what he actually discussed in his reply to my Argument A, I don’t see that he shed much light at all on what was wrong with it.

Further, Guminski makes this comment about my Argument A, in summary: “Since Cook agrees that it is possible for God to create a world in which the natural moral law and its proximate ontological foundation obtains in the ordinary course of nature, it seems to me that Cook should conclude the stand-alone argument fails (prescinding, of course, from all nonmoral arguments and the deliverances of special revelation).”¹⁴

Actually, I was *not* at that point agreeing with him that it is possible for God to create a world in which the natural moral law and its proximate ontological foundations obtain in the ordinary course of nature, etc.. Rather what I was doing *in my discussion of Argument A* was trying to fairly represent *his* argument and to discern what it was Guminski was asserting about how it affected Craig and Moreland’s argument—I was also asking myself whether he takes their argument to be a logical demonstration or an

¹³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

inference to the best explanation or some such. Not to make too fine a point of this, I did say that I “waive[d] (an evaluation of Guminski’s argument) because of length considerations and because, most directly, I do not believe Craig and Moreland were trying for a logical demonstration in their argumentation.”¹⁵ That is to say that I privately thought Guminski’s argument could only work if and only if Craig and Moreland meant their moral argument as a logical demonstration—but they do not.

Remember as Craig and Moreland set it up, it is not the mere logical possibility of the unsoundness of their Premise (1) that would show it to be unsound—it is the plausibility of their Premise (1) compared to the plausibility of its contradiction or denial! What Guminski must agree to show is that denial of Premise 1 is more plausible and that will involve a great deal more than he seems willing to provide because of his procedural rule. Therefore 1) I don’t see he has shown in his reply that Argument A is not relevantly close to one of his basic arguments he makes against Craig and Moreland and that it follows that 2) he has not *shown* there is a critical misconstrual on my part here or if there is it is my fault. Indeed he seems to misconstrue what I was saying along with some of my intentions in so constructing and commenting on what I called Argument A.

ii.

On page 4 of his paper, Guminski apparently thinks my reconstruction of one of his arguments (which I call Argument B in my response) is partially correct, but then asserts that he believes “that Cook grossly and inexplicably misunderstands my argument.” I must confess that I do have some trouble understanding what he did assert in his first paper and even what he is currently asserting **even** after he says in his reply, “let me better explain myself,”¹⁶ but let me try.

In this latest reply Guminski *seems* to be asserting that my Argument B does not really capture the scenario he originally aimed at. I interpret Guminski in this new version to be saying that he felt that *his* argument (which I earlier summarized as Argument A in my first response) *was successful* and therefore he did not need Ockham’s razor to tip the scales in favor of the CMN hypothesis in the way he supposed I supposed.

That is, what Guminski seems to be asserting in his latest reply is that his appeal to Ockham’s razor was not by way of using it as a supplemental buttressing argument, but rather an elucidation of what it means (or is implied) to procedurally accept a “stand-alone” moral argument.¹⁷ In this case, as Guminski sees it, Ockham’s razor operates in favor of CMN (conditionally) *if* Craig and Moreland acknowledge that the natural moral law and its proximate ontological foundation obtains (sic) in the ordinary course of nature.”

Well, I agree that if my interpretation of his most recent reply is correct, I did misunderstand his application of Ockham’s razor in that first paper. But when I go back

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷ Go back and check whether this is clearly implied in his original paper; I don’t think it was.

to his first paper and re-read that section and have only that to go on, I cannot easily derive this latest interpretation from it. I will leave it to others to make their judgment as to how clearly he explained this in his first paper. But if my argument in the first section works then it makes all this academic—the procedural rule that he claims would allow Ockham’s razor to operate in CMN’s favor *is* arbitrarily and improperly invoked.

Once this is taken into consideration it is easy to see that perhaps even a holder of CMN who weights her background beliefs differently than does Guminski may find herself at odds with Guminski’s conclusions. That is, she might be impressed that she finds a “solution” in theism as to how the moral law is embedded in nature. Given her background beliefs she might find it more coherent or plausible to think that the moral law was instantiated by God rather than by a demiurge (if she had leaned towards a Platonic explanation) or instantiated as some kind of a brute fact (if she had leaned towards some sort of naturalistic Aristotelian account). Further she might by virtue of her background beliefs find theism had a better explanation for moral obligation (not just the existence of objective morality) than does CMN. But Guminski is not just claiming that Moreland and Craig’s argument fails for him; he is implicitly claiming that it fails for virtually anyone and especially a holder of CMN.

iii.

On page 6 of Guminski’s reply he asserts that I have gotten another of his arguments “somewhat but significantly wrong.”¹⁸ In so characterizing my reconstruction he does not quote me or really show *where*, with any precision, I got the argument wrong. This is typically thought to be an important thing to do when making the claims he does.

Indeed he does not cite any of the premises of my Argument C or show where they did not fit his construction. What he does do is allege that my “points” reduce “some more efforts to fight the problem.”¹⁹ Though *here* he does quote me, he does not show just how this all reduces to “fighting the problem” in any way that is clear to me. Again, *he* has procedurally agreed to Craig and Moreland’s definition of soundness and that entails that *he* show the plausibility of his position *vis-à-vis* theirs.

If, after Craig and Moreland set up the rules of engagement on what counts as a sound argument (rules with which he implicitly agrees), and he later re-casts the argument so that by his procedural rule that negates his agreement, should one be surprised that he conclude their argument fails? I am not surprised.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 7. Actually, I think that all of his criticisms of all of my reconstructions might reduce to, in his words, “fighting the problem” because it was unclear to me that that is what he meant when he wanted to treat Craig’s and Moreland’s moral argument as stand-alone.

Section #3

In this final section I will first discuss the conflation issue that Guminski raised and defended in both of his papers and, second, discuss the issue of the practical consequences of the argument.

i.

On page 7 of Guminski's reply to me he decides to "pass on to other matters." Guminski asserts that he

"do[es] not think that these writers [Moreland and Craig] consciously intended to gain a polemical advantage by their conflation of the various forms of metaphysical naturalism such that their ostensible targets are unjustly assumed to be nonconservative metaphysical naturalists (chiefly but not exclusively adherents of some version of physicalism or epiphenomenalistic property-dualism), or perhaps naturalists who *should* (in the interest of consistency) be nonconservative."²⁰

His statement presents a bit of a hermeneutical problem for me. Here's my interpretation: I think in the first part of that sentence Guminski maintains that Moreland and Craig *have* conflated various forms of metaphysical naturalism, but that he thinks they did not do so consciously to gain advantage. The second part of the sentence is more a problem to me, but I think Guminski is saying that the alleged conflation ostensibly targets (or ends up targeting) what he calls nonconservative metaphysical naturalists (instead of *including* those metaphysical naturalists who hold CMN) and in so doing that sort of targeting Moreland and Craig are unjust. That is to say they should have targeted CMN, too, and not just physicalism.

Now Guminski concedes that initially Moreland and Craig, when they discuss the existence of objective moral values, are doing so in the stated context of the physicalist version of philosophical naturalism and quotes them as such.²¹ Subsequently in their moral argument for God's existence, some approximately 90 pages later in the text, Guminski asserts, they depend upon the more general premise that if God did not exist, objective moral values would not exist.²² Thus far I have no quarrel with that interpretation of what Moreland and Craig do—so far so good.

When Moreland and Craig do discuss their moral argument for God's existence they do so by first attacking the plausibility of atheistic moral anti-realism—typically but not always embraced by atheistic physicalists.²³ But they *also* attack the plausibility of atheistic moral realism—of the sort CMN would likely embrace (as does Guminski himself) and physicalists would likely not embrace.²⁴ This is the case even though in the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 8.

²³ *Philosophical Foundations of a Christian World View*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), p. 491.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 492-493.

direct discussion of their moral argument, *per se*, they do not specifically mention either physicalism or some brand of what Guminski calls CMN—but the thing to see is that their arguments are broader than either. It is therefore an infelicitous interpretation of their project to draw the conclusion that they have necessarily or likely conflated CMN with physicalism and are only addressing physicalism *in their moral argument*.²⁵

ii.

First of all notice in his reply that Guminski does not retract his implied claim that Copan’s, Craig’s and Moreland’s assertions regarding the implications of not having the sufficient metaphysical resources in naturalism to support natural law *could* be used by them as a “scare-tactic and induce those insecure theists, apprehensive that loss of religious commitment will be followed by immoral behavior, to persist in their religious beliefs.”²⁶ That is to say, Guminski doesn’t seem to have a problem with *suggesting* that their motive in making the argument is to keep believers in the fold, but he asserts strongly that *he did not intend to suggest* that Copan, Craig and Moreland used them intentionally *other than* to convert naturalists to theists.

In footnote 41 on page 10—the last paragraph of his paper—Guminski asserts:

“I think that Cook has carelessly read paragraphs 35 and 36 if he takes them as meaning that Copan, Craig and Moreland had any ultimate intention of doing anything other than to convert naturalists into theists. They surely did not actually intend that their moral arguments should turn metaphysical naturalists into nihilists and to disregard natural morality as providing principles of conduct, or to promote ill-will between theists and naturalist and other atheists. However, I do think their paramount purpose appears to me to have adversely clouded their judgment in the course of presenting the moral plus and the stand-alone moral arguments for God’s existence.”²⁷

For the record, I made no such claim that *he* asserted in paragraphs 35 and 36 of his first paper that Craig and Moreland had other intentions (for naturalists) other than using their argument to convert naturalists into theists. My denying that they had other intentions regarding naturalists was relevant to the issue that Guminski raised about the Final Judgment by God. It does not imply that I affirmed he said anything different. Further, I said, “But why think that this is the aim of their argument for theists and this is most likely an *unintended* consequence for naturalists? (emphasis mine)”²⁸ That is, I clearly

²⁵ This is an amendment to what I said in my first response to Guminski. On page 4 of that paper I said “While it does seem fair to say that Moreland and Craig’s presentation of the moral argument **does not** specifically discuss non-physicalist forms of naturalism, it does seem a stretch to say they did it in the way they did *to gain* an apologetic advantage...” Actually, they do address non-physicalist forms of naturalism implicitly in their discussion of the moral argument—just not specifically by name.

²⁶ “The Moral Argument for God’s Existence, the Natural Moral Law, and Conservative Metaphysical Naturalism” (Guminski’s first paper) pp. 16, 17.

²⁷ “Reply to James A. Cook”. p. 10.

²⁸ James A. Cook. “Response to Guminski,” p. 10. This paper is available on-line at www.theologyforum.net (click on “media” and then “papers”).

distinguished between the two possibly affected groups and treated what he asserted about them differently. It follows that I did not *carelessly* read or interpret his assertions in paragraphs 35 and 36 of his paper as he suggests I did.

Regarding the substance of the argument, in his most recent reply Guminski says that "...the stand-alone moral argument, as presented by Copan, Craig, and Moreland, "constitute an implicit suggestion [albeit unintended] that it is [not] (sic) practically reasonable for naturalists to conform to that law whenever it would be in one's self-interest not to do so...." along with several other charges. Those other charges include (but are not limited to) saying Craig's and Moreland's argument "operates as an unintended to be sure but nevertheless pernicious-in-effect subverter of natural morality" and "it "moreover tends to unnecessarily generate feelings of ill-will between theists and naturalists (and atheists).²⁹

It is hard for me to see where Craig and Moreland are responsible for unintended consequences for certain kinds of naturalists which come about as a result of making a good argument. They are not subverting natural morality, *per se*. They, by their arguments, are subverting *the metaphysical grounds* for naturalists to hold that the natural moral law obtains. If the argument is good then what's the problem? Naturalists of good will who find the argument compelling may look for better metaphysical grounds for their moral intuitions. Those naturalists of bad will may not—does he want Craig and Moreland to refrain from making their argument because Guminski would prefer naturalists of bad will to be unaware of the predicament and so be induced to more likely practice the moral law? How likely is it that they will be so induced to follow the natural law when it conflicts with their perceived self-interest, given their bad will, and how blissful would be their ignorance? So it seems to me that *the* question is whether their moral argument is good or not.

In sum, my interpretation is that the main problem Guminski has with Craig and Moreland (and me) comes from the conjunction of the *unintended* consequences and *the conditional* as to whether Craig's and Moreland's argument *goes through or not*. I am not sure even the unintended consequences Guminski fears are likely to happen and he has not shown empirically that they do. Further, if their argument does go through, I assume he should not have those problems. But I do not think Guminski has shown their argument fails, in fact, I don't think he has directly faced their argument in the way they have presented it. Thus I do continue to think his characterization of its practical implications misses the mark.

James A. Cook
<jcook@InterVarsity.org>

²⁹ "The Moral Argument for God's Existence, the Natural Moral Law, and Conservative Metaphysical Naturalism" (Guminski's first paper) pp. 16, 17.