In Book I of *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis offers a version of the moral argument for God’s existence. Moral arguments for God come in many variations, and have been offered by a number of major thinkers, ranging from Kant to Newman to Robert Adams. Lewis’s variant was a popularized version, owing to its original presentation as BBC radio addresses during the Second World War. Here I will lay out Lewis’s argument, amplifying the discussion just a bit at a few points as needed, and then briefly address three major challenges to the argument.

Perhaps it would be useful to say at the outset that if one is looking for a strict *proof* of God’s existence, Lewis’s argument is bound to disappoint. We can think of a proof as a rigorous deductive argument featuring premises we know or all reasonable people would affirm to be true. Few arguments in philosophy are able to satisfy such stringent requirements, and that is why philosophical arguments rarely constitute proofs. Proofs tend to be associated with certainty, something that most philosophers have realized is elusive. Even if the argument is not a proof, however, it might still be a good argument, in the sense of providing rationally persuasive evidence in favor of the conclusion. I shall argue that Lewis’s moral argument is a good argument in this latter sense.

### 1. The Law of Human Nature

Lewis begins by identifying what he calls the “law of human nature,” which he thinks is on clear display whenever people quarrel about proper behavior. In such situations, people invariably find themselves saying things like “How’d you like it if anyone did the same to you?” or “That’s my seat, I was there first” (Lewis, 1952, p. 17). Educated and uneducated, young and old alike, speak in such terms, and clearly are not simply saying that the other person’s behavior does not happen to please him. Rather, they are appealing to an objective standard of behavior that both parties are presumed to accept. Rarely, Lewis notes, does a person accused of ethical misbehavior say, “To hell with your standard.” Nearly always, the person “tries to make out that
what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it
does there is some special excuse” (Lewis, 1952, p. 17).

So Lewis observes that both parties in ethical quarrels seem to have in
mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality
about which they really agree. What distinguishes humans quarreling, in fact,
from animals fighting, is that “quarrelling means trying to show that the other
man is in the wrong,” which presupposes some measure of agreement about
what is right and wrong (Lewis, 1952, p. 17). This Law of Right and Wrong,
as Lewis calls it, is what he means by the “Law of Human Nature.” Our
bodies are governed by the law of gravitation, but we are also governed by
the law of human nature, except that the latter, unlike the former, can be
disregarded. Like all other things in the natural world, we have no choice
about “obeying” gravitation, but we can choose to obey or disobey the moral
law.

Lewis attributes the old label for the fundamental moral law—“Law of
Nature”—to the fact that people long thought that everyone knew it by nature
and did not need to be taught it. Many ethicists have thought that the human
idea of decent behavior is obvious to everyone. And Lewis is inclined to
concur, insisting that otherwise much that was said about Nazi wrongdoing
would have been nonsense—and Lewis was on pretty solid ground in those
radio talks in assuming that most of his audience entertained rather strong
convictions about Nazi culpability.

Lewis’s first point, then, is that most everyone assumes that there is an
objective, binding, authoritative moral law. Some actions (and presumably
other things too, like motives, but we will focus on actions) are right, and
some are wrong, objectively speaking. At this point Lewis anticipates an
objection from the ranks of relativists, those who wish to relativize morality to
culture. Usually relativists begin with the diversity thesis, the claim that moral
beliefs and practices have varied widely throughout the world and human
history. Ethical relativism, however, is the idea not merely that moral beliefs
and practices vary from one culture to another, but that actual moral truth
itself is relative. Something may be ethically right in Culture A but not in
Culture B. How diversity of ethical belief can be thought to lead to ethical
relativism depends on the sort of relativist we consider. Some might wish to
argue that the best explanation of the diversity thesis is ethical relativism;
others might think that diversity in moral belief causes diversity in moral
truth; yet others might think it is a semantic or logical connection, trading on
an equivocation of the term “moral” as meaning both moral belief on the one
hand and moral truth on the other.

Lewis’s main response to the relativist challenge, however, goes after the
diversity thesis itself, which many might think is the least vulnerable part of
the challenge. Lewis’s point is not that no such diversity exists; rather his
suggestion seems to be that there is not nearly so much diversity as is