# Card Doc – RR

## Skepticism

### 1nc

#### The aff has the burden of proving a moral obligation to do the plan.

#### Should requires moral obligation.

**Collins Dictionary**, “When do you use 'should' in English?”, No Date, <https://grammar.collinsdictionary.com/us/easy-learning/when-do-you-use-should-in-english>) rose

The modal verb should is used in the following ways:

to talk about moral obligation.

They should do what you suggest. People should report this sort of thing to the police. She suggested we should visit Aunty Irene more often. Rob insisted that we should think of others before ourselves.

#### Prefer it for education and fairness. Debates about moral philosophy assume the validity of consequentialism, and philosophical education drives how we interact with the world and politics. A risk we’re starting from the wrong foundation justifies debates about that foundation. Any other interpretation will fail to provide a coherent burden structure and arbitrarily exclude neg ground.

#### Skepticism is true:

#### **1. Argument from best explanation.**

#### **Moral facts are explanatorily redundant.**

**Machuca 18**, PhD, Associate Researcher in Philosophy at CONICET, (Diego, “Moral Skepticism: An Introduction and Overview” in *Moral Skepticism: New Essays*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 9-10) rose

The argument from the best explanation, discussed particularly by Harman (1977: 7–10, 13, 130–132), claims that there are no moral facts or prop- erties because they do not figure in the best explanation of why we have moral beliefs or make moral judgments. Here is a possible formulation of the argument:

1. Our having moral beliefs is best explained by certain psychological and socio-cultural facts about us, not by there being moral facts.

2. If moral facts are explanatorily redundant, then they do not exist.

Therefore:

3. There are no moral facts.

The second premise can be interpreted as expressing a principle of parsimony according to which one should not unnecessarily multiply entities: if a kind of entity is not necessary for explaining a given phenomenon, one should not affirm or accept its existence; moreover, one should deny that it exists. That explanatory redundancy or dispensability suffices by itself to assert that something does not exist is no doubt questionable. It could be argued that the second premise should instead be couched in epistemological terms: if certain facts are explanatorily redundant or dispensable, then one has no reason for believing in their existence. In this case, the conclusion of the argument would of course be epistemological as well. Interpreted in this way, the argument still raises a serious challenge to moral realists: they would have the burden of providing reasons for believing that there are moral facts or properties. Note that if the ontological version of argument from the best explanation were sound, it would provide a rebutting defeater for our moral beliefs: it would show that our moral beliefs are false because there are no moral facts or properties. If the epistemological version were sound, it would provide an undercutting defeater: it would show that the realist explanation of our having moral beliefs is not as good as we thought it was. Note also that, even if moral facts understood in a deflationary manner were not explanatorily redundant, the argument could still be formulated so as to tar- get specifically non-minimal moral realism. For example, it could be argued that, although relative moral facts figure in the best explanation of our having moral beliefs, objective or mind-independent moral facts do not. Let me finally observe that, as we will see in the next subsections, some of the other arguments for moral skepticism can be viewed as versions of the argument from the best explanation insofar as they include a premise that refers to the alleged best explanation of a given phenomenon.

#### Specifically, evolution explains moral attitudes.

**Street 6**, chair of the Philosophy department at New York University, which is currently the #1 ranked Philosophy department worldwide. (Sharon, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value” Philosophical Studies (2006) 127:109-166, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11098-005-1726-6>) rose

\*realist theories of value are theories that hold moral claims are objectively true

Contemporary realist theories of value claim to be compatible with natural science. In this paper, I call this claim into question by arguing that Darwinian considerations pose a dilemma for these theories. The main thrust of my argument is this. Evolutionary forces have played a tremendous role in shaping the content of human evaluative attitudes. The challenge for realist theories of value is to explain the relation between these evolutionary influences on our evaluative attitudes, on the one hand, and the independent evaluative truths that realism posits, on the other. Realism, I argue, can give no satisfactory account of this relation. On the one hand, the realist may claim that there is no relation between evolutionary influences on our evaluative attitudes and independent evaluative truths. But this claim leads to the implausible skeptical result that most of our evaluative judgements are off track due to the distorting pressure of Darwinian forces. The realist’s other option is to claim that there is a relation between evolutionary influences and independent evaluative truths, namely that natural selection favored ancestors who were able to grasp those truths. But this account, I argue, is unacceptable on scientific grounds. Either way, then, realist theories of value prove unable to accommodate the fact that Darwinian forces have deeply influenced the content of human values. After responding to three objections, the third of which leads me to argue against a realist understand- ing of the disvalue of pain, I conclude by sketching how antirealism is able to sidestep the dilemma I have presented. Antirealist theories of value are able to offer an alternative account of the relation between evolutionary forces and evaluative facts an account that allows us to reconcile our understanding of evaluative truth with our understanding of the many non-rational causes that have played a role in shaping our evaluative judgements.

#### As does cultural difference.

**Joyce 15**, Professor of Philosophy at Victoria University of Wellington. (Richard, “Mackie’s Arguments for the Moral Error Theory,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archIves/sum2020/entries/moral-anti-realism/moral-error-theory.html>) rose

The Argument from Relativity (often more perspicaciously referred to as “the Argument from Disagreement”) begins with an empirical observation: that there is an enormous amount of variation in moral views, and that moral disagreements are often characterized by an unusual degree of intractability. Mackie argues that the best explanation of these phenomena is that moral judgments “reflect adherence to and participation in different ways of life” (1977: 36). This, at least, is a better explanation than the hypothesis that there is a realm of objective moral facts to which some cultures have inferior epistemic access than others. The example Mackie uses is of two cultures' divergent moral views regarding monogamy. Is it really plausible, he asks, that one culture enjoys access to the moral facts regarding marital arrangements whereas the other lacks that access? Isn't it much more likely that monogamy happened to develop in one culture but not in the other (for whatever cultural or anthropological reasons), and that the respective moral views emerged *as a result*?

#### 2. Is-ought gap. Ethics must inevitable move from descriptive premises about the world to prescriptive judgments about how it ought be. That renders ethics non-propositional and logically impossible.

**Cohon 18**, professor of philosophy at Albany University, (Rachel, “Hume’s Moral Philosophy,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/#ear>) rose

Hume famously closes the section of the *Treatise* that argues against moral rationalism by observing that other systems of moral philosophy, proceeding in the ordinary way of reasoning, at some point make an unremarked transition from premises whose parts are linked only by “is” to conclusions whose parts are linked by “ought” (expressing a new relation) — a deduction that seems to Hume “altogether inconceivable” (T3.1.1.27). Attention to this transition would “subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv’d by reason” (ibid.).

Few passages in Hume’s work have generated more interpretive controversy.

According to the dominant twentieth-century interpretation, Hume says here that no ought-judgment may be correctly inferred from a set of premises expressed only in terms of ‘is,’ and the vulgar systems of morality commit this logical fallacy. This is usually thought to mean something much more general: that no ethical or indeed evaluative conclusion whatsoever may be validly inferred from any set of purely factual premises. A number of present-day philosophers, including R. M. Hare, endorse this putative thesis of logic, calling it “Hume’s Law.” (As Francis Snare observes, on this reading Hume must simply assume that no purely factual propositions are themselves evaluative, as he does not argue for this.) Some interpreters think Hume commits himself here to a non-propositional or noncognitivist view of moral judgment — the view that moral judgments do not state facts and are not truth-evaluable. (If Hume has already used the famous argument about the motivational influence of morals to establish noncognitivism, then the is/ought paragraph may merely draw out a trivial consequence of it. If moral evaluations are merely expressions of feeling without propositional content, then of course they cannot be inferred from any propositional premises.) Some see the paragraph as denying ethical realism, excluding values from the domain of facts.

#### 3. Determinism.

#### Determinism proves skepticism – if moral responsibility doesn’t exist, neither does morality.

**Morris 24**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at The College of Staten Island/CUNY, (Stephen, *Moral Damages: The Case for Abolishing Morality*, Palgrave McMillan, 2024) rose

While many consider Mackie’s Argument from Queerness to pose the strongest challenge to moral objectivism—Peter Singer was persuaded enough by it to deny the existence of objective moral facts in the first printing of The Expanding Circle in 1981—I believe a stronger theoretical case against moral realism comes by way of arguments denying the possibility of free will for human agents. In Chap. 2, I discussed how a backward-looking, and more specifically retributivist, form of moral responsibility appears central to both folk attitudes about free will and the main philosophical discussions surrounding it.3 Since this conception of free will seems to be the one most invoked in our moral judgments, establishing that people are incapable of exhibiting free will of this sort would indicate that we should deny that human agents can be held morally responsible. Furthermore, one might naturally think that were humans incapable of exercising free will, we should deny the truth of all moral claims. After all, if a person cannot be held morally responsible for his actions, it seems reasonable to think either that they cannot be said to have acted in a way that was morally wrong (or right) or that they are morally obligated to act/not act in a particular fashion. This is the view of C. A. Campbell, who claimed that if we cannot possess the kind of moral responsibility that requires free will we are thereby forced to give up “the reality of the moral life.”4 Though I assume the truth of this view, I consider challenges to it in Chap. 4.

#### Causal determinism –

#### Explainability makes every action causally traceable – that leaves no space for free will.

**Hoefer 23**, professor of philosophy at the University of Barcelona, (Carl, “Causal Determinism,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinism-causal/#Int>) rose

The notion of determinism may be seen as one way of cashing out a historically important nearby idea: the idea that everything can, in principle, be explained, or that everything that is, has a sufficient reason for being and being as it is, and not otherwise, i.e., Leibniz’s Principle of Sufficient Reason. Leibniz’s PSR, however, is not linked to physical laws; arguably, one way for it to be satisfied is for God to will that things should be just so and not otherwise. This does not require that physical or causal determinism hold. On the other hand, on a strict reading Leibniz’s PSR may be more demanding than determinism. Under determinism, particular facts and events are the way they are due to the laws and the particular facts of how things stood at an earlier time, for example at the beginning of time. But there need be no answer to the question “Why were things just so at the beginning of time?”, and hence no complete sufficient reason for all facts and events.[[1](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinism-causal/notes.html#note-1)]

#### B. Empirical determinism – actions aren’t consciously selected but unconsciously automated.

**Morris 24**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at The College of Staten Island/CUNY, (Stephen, *Moral Damages: The Case for Abolishing Morality*, Palgrave McMillan, 2024) rose

While it is reasonable to assume that being morally responsible—and, thus, being open to legitimate moral assessment—requires that one be capable of consciously willing one’s actions, one might still wonder why this should threaten the moral realist’s claim that at least some of our actions are worthy of moral appraisal. After all, during our conscious moments it would appear that our actions are very different in nature from the killing perpetrated by the allegedly sleepwalking Jules Lowe. As it turns out, however, recent discoveries in neuroscience call into question whether conscious will ever instigates our behavior in the way we ordinarily assume. And if it should turn out that our conscious will is never causally relevant to our behavior (i.e., that consciousness is epiphenomenal), we would have good reason to believe that all moral judgments pertaining to human beings are false.

When philosophers during the past two decades have addressed the subject of whether science lends credence to epiphenomenalism, discussions have tended to focus on a series of experiments conducted by neuroscientist Benjamin Libet beginning in the 1980s. In sum, Libet asked subjects to perform a basic action (flexing one’s right wrist) and identify the time at which they became aware of making a conscious decision to flex. The brain activity of these subjects was also measured, and Libet found that brain activity seemingly associated with the wrist flexings preceded subjects’ experiences of having consciously willed the action by about 350 ms. Based on these results, Libet suggested that conscious will may not be the initiating cause of the wrist flexings and, furthermore, that unconscious brain processes may serve as the initiating causes of all human behavior.9 On the basis of this and other experiments studying the relationship between actions and both conscious and unconscious brain processes, some academics have concluded that conscious will is illusory.10

Though one could provide a much more thorough discussion involving the details and implications of the Libet experiments, I will refrain from doing so for two reasons. The first is that there have been so many analyses of Libet’s work by philosophers in recent years that I suspect that anyone with a passing interest in either philosophy of mind or action theory is already familiar with it.11 The second is that I believe recent discussions about how the physiology and functioning of the brain impacts the issue of free will have probably put too much emphasis on what the Libet experiments, and the similar experiments that followed, prove or don’t prove. The catalyst for Libet’s emergence in philosophical circles was psychologist Daniel Wegner’s 2002 book, The Illusion of Conscious Will. In it, he draws from a wide variety of experimental work to conclude that there are distinct modules within the brain that serve different functions. On the one hand we have what one may call the performance module, which consists of the unconscious processes that are responsible for producing all our actions. On the other hand, there is what one might call the interpreter module, which gives rise to the experience of conscious will by interpreting our behavior in terms of intentional states. According to Wegner, the interpreter module is constantly providing us with false narratives about how our actions were produced. He claims that despite the experience of conscious will provided by the interpreter module, conscious will never causes our behavior.

In trying to defend free will against the threat posed by the specter of epiphenomenalism, philosophers have tended to focus on Libet’s experiments and to object to the kinds of conclusions drawn from them by individuals like Wegner and Libet himself. To their credit, these arguments—which often appeal to more recent studies—have made a compelling case that Libet’s experiments, by themselves, are insufficient to establish the causal inefficacy of conscious will.12 The problem with these arguments, however, is that they generally fail to address how the kind of position taken by Libet and Wegner is supported by a slew of other research in psychology and neuroscience.13

In Wegner’s 2002 book, he explains how his account of conscious will is supported by empirical work involving brain damage cases, automatisms, hypnosis, and direct brain stimulation cases. Perhaps more importantly, Wegner’s dual-module model of the brain that I sketched above, which lends itself to skepticism regarding the causal efficacy of conscious will, fits very well with what contemporary neuroscience tells us. For instance, Wegner’s notion of specific modules operating inside the brain is essentially the view taken by psychologist Michael Gazzaniga based on his groundbreaking research involving “split-brain” patients who have had the corpus callosum connecting the right and left hemispheres of the brain severed as a treatment for epilepsy. Note how Gazzaniga’s description of how “the brain and the mind are built from discreet units—or modules—that carry out specific functions” (1998, p. 53) sounds almost identical to the account given by Wegner. He goes on further to say, also in line with Wegner, how research on split-brain patients suggests that the human brain contains an “interpreter mechanism” in the left hemisphere that is constantly involved in forming a conscious narrative for people’s behavior that is often incorrect. As he puts it:

The interpretive mechanism of the left hemisphere is always hard at work, seeking the meaning of events. It is constantly looking for order and reason, even where there is none—which leads it continually to make mistakes. It tends to overgeneralize, frequently constructing a potential past as opposed to a true one. (Ibid., p. 54)

Additional support for the dual-module account of the brain offered by Wegner comes by way of a 2022 paper by Andrew E. Budson and his colleagues, in which they defend an account of consciousness according to which “the brain processes that decide and act are unconscious” (p. 271). Echoing the stance taken by Wegner some twenty years earlier, they hold that “the actual decisions and actions themselves are made and carried out by the unconscious self, and…we experience the conscious decision being made or action taking place only after the fact” (Ibid.). Like Wegner, Budson et al. bolster their account by appealing to a wide variety studies (including those of Gazzaniga), and they draw support from how their account of consciousness helps explain some psychological phenomena and puzzles better than more traditional accounts of behavior that assume the causal power of conscious will.

### 2ac Definitions

**2. Should expresses desirability.**

**Cambridge ND**. Cambridge Dictionary. “Should.” https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/should

used to express that it is necessary, desirable, or important to perform the action of the following verb:

**3. Their reading is just one use of “should.”**

Gilbert **Harman 75**, Professor, "Moral Relativism Defended," The Philosophical Review, vol. 84, no. 1, 01/01/1975, pp. 3-22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2184078

The sentence "They ought not to go around killing people" is therefore multiply ambiguous. It can mean that one would not expect them to do so (the "ought" of expectation), that it is not in their interest to do so (the "ought" of rationality), that it is a bad thing that they do so (the normative "ought to be"), or that they are wrong to do so (the moral "ought to do"). For the most part I am here concerned only with the last of these interpre- tations.

The word "should" behaves very much like "ought to." There is a "should" of expectation ("They should be here soon"), a "should" of rationality ("He should go in by the back door"), a normative "should be" ("They shouldn't go around killing people like that"), and the moral "should do" ("You should keep that promise"). I am of course concerned mainly with the last sense of "should."

### 2nc – Pareto Optimal

#### The United States federal government should enact a policy which is mutually exclusive with, but Pareto optimal to The United States federal government should remove the Agricultural Fair Practices Act's disclaimer clause, requiring good faith bargaining between distributors and farmworker collectives not covered by antitrust.

Sager ’80 [Lawrence; former professor, NYU School of Law; Hofstra Law Review, “Pareto Superiority, Consent, and Justice,” vol. 8, no. 4, https://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1371&context]

As no reader of the symposium can have escaped learning, the operative notion in Paretian analysis is that sometimes the choice between two states of affairs will involve one state which seems obviously to be preferred over its alternative in that at least one person is better off in this preferred state and no person is worse off. Where this can be said of state B as compared to state A, state B is described as Pareto superior to state A. Where, further, it can be said of state B that no other state of affairs enjoys as to it a relationship of Pareto superiority, then state B is described as Pareto optimal. Paretian analysis traditionally concerns itself with welfare, that is, with the subjective preferences of individuals within a society for various states of affairs. A more precise statement of Pareto superiority would thus be: "State of affairs B is Pareto superior to state of affairs A when at least one person prefers state B to A and no person is less content in state B than in A."

#### Descriptions are definite references.

Donnellan ’66 [Keith; July; former Professor of Philosophy at UCLA; The Philosophical Review, “Reference and Definite Descriptions,” vol. 75, no. 3, https://www.uvm.edu/~lderosse/courses/lang/Donnellan(1966).pdf]

I will call the two uses of definite descriptions I have in mind the attributive use and the referential use. A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable ~~his~~ [their] audience to pick out whom or what ~~he is~~ [they are] talking about and states something about that person or thing. In the first case the definite description might be said to occur essentially, for the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or whoever fits that description; but in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job–calling attention to a person or thing–and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name, would do as well. In the attributive use, the attribute of being the so-and-so is all important, while it is not in the referential use.

### 2nr – AT Physics

#### Physics doesn’t disprove determinism on the ethical level.

**Caruso 18**, professor of Philosophy at SUNY Corning, (Gregg, “Skepticism About Moral Responsibility,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Jan 18th, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-moral-responsibility/>) rose

Hard determinism had its classic statement in the time when Newtonian physics reigned (see, Spinoza 1677 [1985]; d’Holbach 1770), but it has very few defenders today—largely because the standard interpretation of quantum mechanics has been taken by many to undermine, or at least throw into doubt, the thesis of universal determinism. This is not to say that determinism has been refuted or falsified by modern physics, because it has not. Determinism still has its modern defenders (e.g., Honderich 1988, 2002) and the final interpretation of physics is not yet in (see, for example, the entry on Bohmian mechanics). It is also important to keep in mind that even if we allow some indeterminacy to exist at the microlevel of our existence—the level studied by quantum mechanics—there would still likely remain determinism-where-it-matters (Honderich 2002: 5). That is,

At the ordinary level of choices and actions, and even ordinary electrochemical activity in our brains, causal laws govern what happens. It’s all cause and effect in what you might call real life. (Honderich 2002: 5)

## T

### 1nr – Considerable

#### They don’t meet. Considerable means 50%.

Widley Online ND, (“Reviewer Guidelines,” https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15213773/homepage/reviewer-guidelines)

When evaluating the importance of the work, please put the reported findings into the context of impact on the subject area and breadth of interest to the scientific community. The level of importance can be rated outstanding (top 5% compared to published work in the same subject area), high (top 20%), considerable (top 50%), moderate (bottom 50%), low (bottom 20%). You should give reasons for your judgment of the importance in line with the following guidelines: