

What is the Source of Human Value?

The foundations of morality and what this means for the value of human beings

Abstract

Do we matter? The assumption that humans are valuable pervades our thought. Human rights, political ideologies, and perhaps morality itself, hinge on this assumption. But how can we account for this? We must explore the foundations of morality to answer this question. That is, we must explore what it is that justifies moral claims, what it *means* to say that one has a moral obligation. The question is not just whether one is justified in believing that humans are valuable, but whether humans are valuable in some objective sense. I compare two theories; moral realism argues that value is 'out there'. Some things have inherent value, including, perhaps, humans. What we must do is discover this. Constructivists argue that morality, like time, is a construct, but an important one. Value only makes sense within the human perspective. Without humans (or animals) nothing is valuable. I examine Christine Korsgaard's theory as an example of constructivism. I conclude that whilst both accounts face problems, they are promising, and moral nihilism looks unattractive. What future philosophers must do is counter the problems the theories face in order to support the conclusion that we are obliged to respect the value of humans.

Keywords: morality, ethics, constructivism, realism, Korsgaard, Kant, philosophy, source, human, value, valuable

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1. Introduction

Do we matter? We wander the world thinking we are valuable. We make demands on each other, the planet, and animals. We protest at human rights abuses. In so doing we are assuming that humans are valuable. Is this the case? What is the *source* of that value? Our project to understand whether and how humans are valuable will take us to theories about the very *foundations* of morality*. We need to explore the question: What *makes it true* that we have moral obligations? When I ask ‘are humans valuable’, I don’t mean to ask whether you or I in actual fact think that humans are valuable; most of us do. The question is *are we obliged, bound, committed* to valuing humans? In other words, are humans in some sense objectively valuable? In ascribing value to something I mean that it has moral status, that it *matters*. I am not looking at economic or instrumental value. I am interested in whether our *being* humans is a sufficient condition for our having value. I am exploring whether we have intrinsic moral value.

There are two main theories that answer these questions. One account is this: humans are valuable because it is an objective fact about the world, in the same way that gravity will pull my laptop to the floor were I to drop it. This response comes from Moral Realists. They say that moral facts exist independently of us. Another account is this: we are valuable because in living our lives, in acting at all, we are *bound* to value humanity. It would be a contradiction

for us not to. This reply comes from a Constructivist, namely Christine Korsgaard.

Constructivists see morality as a construct, but an important and real one. We shall analyse these theories, examine their accounts of human value and explore the problems facing them. I shall argue that constructivists, in particular Christine Korsgaard, come very close to establishing the conclusion that everyone *must* value humanity. Realism has promise, constructivism more so, but both face problems. One thing is for sure: moral nihilism is not an attractive option, given the strength of the theories that argue that humans are valuable.

I confess that I will not explore those moral theories that argue that morality is a chimera, a cobweb of the brain. Some philosophers think that when I say 'it was wrong that the US invaded Vietnam', I am simply expressing emotion. They think that my moral judgements do not refer to obligations that actually exist. They think that moral judgements cannot possibly be true or false*. If these philosophers are right, it would be very odd to say that humans have value, because they believe that moral knowledge is not possible. The only thing I take for granted in my examination of the less nihilistic moral theories is that moral statements *can* be rendered true or false, that they are not just emotion.

Note that in the appendix I provide a philosophical glossary to explain starred* terms and concepts.

2. Introduction to Moral Realism

Moral Realism is the view that morality exists independently of human beings. It claims that there is a moral reality that our moral judgements attempt to *describe* in the same way that there is a natural reality that scientists attempt to describe when doing science. It conceives of ethics as a branch of knowledge; what we need to do is *discover* moral facts, which already exist in the world. What anyone thinks or does will not change the nature of moral facts, although the nature of humans may be taken into account by realism. For example, if a realist decided that causing pain was wrong, then she would take into account that fact that cheating causes humans pain when exploring the ethics of cheating.

There are different brands of realism, so my discussion of realism will be far from complete. Naturalism identifies moral properties with natural ones. For example, the natural and the normative* come together in pleasure and pain. Note that 'normative' issues deal with what *ought* to be the case, as opposed to what *is* the case. Some forms of non-naturalism argue that moral properties are a set of entities of their own sort (Shafer-Landau, 2003: 76).

2.1. Objections

Two significant worries plunge Realism into doubt. A key issue in moral philosophy is the 'Normative question'. *Why* ought I to meet the claims of morality? *What justifies* these claims? Christine Korsgaard objects that realism fails to even answer the question (Korsgaard, 2010: 28-47). Arguing that moral facts are self-justifying requires confidence that such things exist. The realists cannot answer the nihilist who has lost confidence that pain or some other normative entity matters. But explanation has to stop somewhere, the realist can reply. Shafer-Landau, a contemporary realist, argues that in mathematics and physics, there are laws *without* lawmakers, and thus without explanations. The fact that $1+2=3$ requires no justification. Moral laws could just be like that (Shafer-Landau, 2003). They *just exist*.

Secondly, some argue that realism requires that we have faith in mysterious entities. Two ways of cashing this out run as follows. John Mackie's "Queerness Objection" expresses surprise at realism's claims: if Moral Facts existed, they would be a very odd sort of thing (Mackie, 1977). They would resemble nothing else in the world. The way in which we would come to know them would be unlike any of our other faculties, e.g. vision. They would be able to guide and motivate us like nothing else. They would, in a word, be quite *fantastic*. Similarly, Ronald Dworkin thinks that realism's claims neither explain nor sit well with the causal events science describes:

'The idea of a direct impact between moral properties and human beings supposes that the universe houses, among its numerous particles of energy and matter, some special particles – morons – whose energy and momentum establish fields that at

once constitute the morality or immorality [of actions]...[is] insanity as a piece of physics' (Dworkin, 1996: 104-105).

To Mackie, we can say that he does not show that moral facts cannot exist. He merely shows that moral facts would be a very different sort of fact. That, in a sense, is what Shafer-Landau argues! Shafer-Landau has a response to Dworkin in the claim that 'there are genuine features of our world that remain forever outside the purview of the natural sciences' (Shafer-Landau, 2003: 4). Perhaps Dworkin's use of physics as a yardstick for what exists begs the question against the realist, who declares physics incapable of describing everything there is in the world. Though these criticisms, even if successful, cannot prove the falsity of realism, they do shed doubt upon it. Making our discussion more concrete by examining one type of realism will allow us to see what the realist can say in response.

A realist could argue that the *capacity for pain* is the source of human value and stands behind moral obligations. In response to our first worry about realism, namely that it fails to answer the normative question, the view that pain has a normative status is attractive, as Korsgaard admits (Korsgaard, 2010: 145). It seems that pain is something that should be avoided. Perhaps the capacity for pain can give rise to rights. These rights could constitute our non-natural normative entities that the critics of realism claim, are 'mysterious', as in the second objection.

Two objections await this view. Firstly, Korsgaard objects that pain is not inherently normative because it is not always bad. When one loses a loved one, we want to *feel* the pain. She offers this as a reason why pain is not inherently bad (Korsgaard, 2010: 154). But it's neither here nor there. The reason we want to feel that pain when one loses a loved one is because it is better than not feeling the pain that ought to follow from such an event. If one does *not* feel the pain, one instead feels another type of pain. One feels confusion and self-hatred. Generalising this, we can say that some pain is necessary to avoid future pain, but it does not follow that this necessary pain is good. I acknowledge Korsgaard's worry that it seems hard to argue decisively that pain is inherently bad and that we are obliged to avoid

inflicting it. Yet in defending herself against the sceptic who does not think that such a thing as 'value' exists, Korsgaard wrote 'go and make a choice, and you will change your mind' (Korsgaard, 2010: 125). We can turn the tables on Korsgaard. In response to her worry that pain is not inherently normative, we can say: "go feel pain, and you will change your mind". All of us have probably expressed the intuition that pain is inherently bad.

A second objection claims that this particular view would render indefensible the view that all humans are of equal value. Someone who is insensitive to physical pain would have less value than someone who is not. But someone who has Congenital Insensitivity to Pain (CIP) cannot feel *physical* pain. This means that their incapacity to feel *physical* pain means they have no rights that spring from physical pain alone. Their ability to feel emotional pain would leave most of their rights – political, bodily, economic, etc. – intact. So one's capacities to feel pain and one's rights co-vary, and our theory is not worse because of this.

But a blissfully ignorant person has a lower *emotional* capacity for pain, and so a lower value, than a sensitive person. Perhaps we have to accept this implication. Then our cherished persons-as-morally-equal view will be relegated to a useful political tool. So whilst the two problems which we outlined are not decisive, realism looks hard to defend.

3. Introduction to Constructivism

Realists focus on the world in trying to explain value and morality. Whilst most maintain that there is moral objectivity in some sense, constructivists think that we must look to humans to be able to speak about morality. They see moral facts are "constructed" by some process. Some say that morality just *is* what is decided as the result some process of deliberation. For instance, there are Ideal Observer theorists, who think that moral truth is derived from what an ideal observer would decide if she possessed all the facts and uses them to reason perfectly. So when I say 'the US ought not to have invaded Vietnam' I am saying that an ideal observer, who reasons perfectly without blinding emotion, factual error, or vested interests, would not have endorsed invading Vietnam. Although it is the output of a

constructive process, moral reality does exist under these accounts, and so moral statements can be true or false. Other constructivists, including Korsgaard, see value as deriving from the beings who are in the act of valuing things. Value is projected onto the world from beings. In sum, what constructivists have in common is that they see morality as a construct, but nevertheless an important one. An analogy is time: some think that time is part of the human way of living, but this need not lead us to reject time as useless.

3.1. Immanuel Kant

I have chosen to explore Christine Korsgaard's constructivist theory (Korsgaard, 1996, 2008, 2010). She is heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant*. As her theory is inspired by, and reacts to, Kant, it is instructive to understand him. Don't panic if you do not understand the following attempt to squeeze Kant into 400 words! Kant thought that must set our own laws and seek the principle of morality in ourselves, not in the world. Specifically, Kant thought that we are bound by the 'Categorical Imperative'. We should only act upon principles that can be *universalised*, such as 'do *not* cheat on your partner just because you feel like it' (for example). One of two types of contradiction render a principle immoral, Kant argues. Firstly, a principle can itself be contradictory, and secondly it could contradict something else you will. For example, the principle 'do cheat on your partner whenever you feel like it' exemplifies the first sort of contradiction. This would render a state of affairs in which there would be no monogamous relationships. Couples would either break up as a result of cheating, or would agree that cheating is no longer cheating. So the principle falls apart; it is contradictory. An example of a contradiction of the second type is the principle: 'let your talents decay because it is better to be lazy'. Imagine that an hour later, you will to have an intelligent conversation with someone. Your willing that contradicts your principle. So it violates a duty [2]. Why was Kant so obsessed with universal principles? He thought we were obliged to follow these principles. His argument is simple: If we are to take ourselves as free, as we must, we must act according to our 'will'. Kant's concept of a 'will' signifies the idea of one's self taking it upon oneself to cause something. And the idea of a cause implies

law-like regularity; we speak of gravity *causing* apples to fall because we regard gravity as a physical *law*. A will thus acts in law-like ways. What, then is a 'free' will? It is one that is not determined by external forces, such as God, society, or desires. So we are *autonomous** when we determine our own will. Nothing decides the content of the will, or it would no longer be free. As Korsgaard puts it, '*all that it has to be is a law*' (Kant, 1998: xxvi). So Kant's idea of autonomy is key to his system. Acting in accordance with the Categorical Imperative involves acting in accordance with laws we have ourselves created. This is autonomy. Notice that above I implied that according to Kant, desires form no part of a moral act, otherwise we are not free but are constrained by our desires. The question then arises: what can determine our actions? Kant's answer is *reason*. For this he has been criticised as cold and failing to understand the importance of desire to human life. Reacting to such criticisms comes Korsgaard. Her theory is not relativist, yet is human. It is law-like, yet existential.

3.2. Christine Korsgaard's theory

Korsgaard presents us with a highly attractive account of the foundations of morality and a strong argument for why we are *bound* to value humanity. She explains why we ought to listen to the demands of morality without detaching morality from the daily lives and experiences of humans. Korsgaard's theory lies within the Constructivist tradition because she thinks that our obligations are derived from identities that we *construct* ourselves.

How does Korsgaard derive the value of humans? She starts off with the notion of 'practical identities'. A practical identity – such as being a father, a student, a nurse or a world citizen – is a *description of yourself under which you take your actions to be worth undertaking*.

Korsgaard derives our obligations from these practical identities. She points out that these identities form one's integrity, which denotes a 'oneness'. These identities forbid certain actions, as these actions threaten one's integrity. For instance, therapists say "Therapists *don't* gossip about clients' problems". Notice the *don't*. Normally, moral claims require a *should* or an *ought*. But what is being said here is that you *can't* simultaneously be a

therapist and someone who gossips about clients' problems. Doing this threatens our integrity, and so we have an *obligation* not to do this.

Korsgaard's first premise in establishing the value of humanity is:

- 1) Acting requires some personal identity or other.

Acting requires reasons. Reasons come from who we are – the desires we have, the things we enjoy, and so forth. Without some description of yourself, some idea of who you are, very few actions would be worth doing. Without practical identities, we lose our reasons to act or live at all. One could object that acting does not require reasons. We could live as wantons who roam around fulfilling the desires that come to us. But in deciding to live like this, we must have taken this life to be worth undertaking. So the wanton still has a practical identity. Her second premise is:

- 2) Any practical identity *entails* the practical identity of being a human

Korsgaard says that as reflective beings – beings who *think* about what to do – we *need* a practical identity. So the fact that we have a practical identity *springs from*, as she puts it, our being humans, and so entails the identity of being a human. Gibbard objects that it is possible to not identify with humanity at all (Gibbard, 1999). However, by acting as a human we are committed to seeing being human as worth it. Whether some minuscule minority can escape having being human as part of their identity is debatable, but this premise looks strong. Her next premise is that:

- 3) Any human practical identity *entails* valuing one's humanity.

Note that 'humanity' is being used in a particular sense here, to mean one's ability to reason and act. A practical identity provides reason for action. People act because they see the end of their action as good. They have *reasoned* in setting ends for themselves. In other words, they have used their 'humanity'. In so doing one must value one's humanity. If one did not,

one could not set ends for oneself. Analogously, I cannot travel to Paris to climb the Eiffel Tower if I think that climbing the Eiffel Tower has no value whatsoever.

4) Valuing one's own humanity commits you to valuing humanity

Korsgaard feels entitled to 4) because she does not think that distinguishing between valuing one's humanity and valuing humanity is actually necessary. So *acting at all implies valuing humanity*. In other words, by acting at all we are bound, obliged, committed, to valuing humans: that is the source of human value.

Before we challenge Korsgaard's theory, we must tackle a possible misunderstanding. If our practical identities tell us to do bad things, must Korsgaard accept these as moral? If it is my practical identity to be an egoist, to only care about myself, do I have no obligation to care about others, or, worse, an obligation *not* to care about others? Korsgaard has argued that any practical identity entails the identity as a human. This identity as a human conflicts with, and overrides, any practical identity that gets in the way. The identity of being human gives rise to certain obligations. This will be challenged presently.

3.3. Objections to Korsgaard

I have two problems with Korsgaard's argument.

Firstly, even if we allow that Korsgaard does establish a source of human value, she only manages to establish a weak source of value. All she can say – and she admits this – is that *from our perspective* we are valuable, not, simply, that we are valuable. Korsgaard cannot argue that it is a fact about the world that humans are valuable, akin to scientific fact. This is a disappointing result, because some may say that it is too natural, too inevitable that humans will find humans to be valuable.

We can respond by arguing that the nature of value simply does not allow us to establish that something has value from a detached perspective. Korsgaard writes that

Value, like freedom, is only directly accessible from within the standpoint of reflective consciousness... From [an] external, third-person perspective, all we can say is that when we are in the first-person perspective we find ourselves to be valuable, rather than simply that we are valuable... Trying to see the value of humanity from the third-person perspective is like trying to see the colours someone sees by cracking open his skull. (Korsgaard, 2010: 124)

Korsgaard follows Kant it is not possible to establish a “stronger” form of value. It can only exist within the perspectives of beings.

We can object that such a view leads to unacceptable results. If someone values single-race nations, does that mean that single-race nations have value? Surely not. If not, we need a theory as to why some valuations create value and others do not. Thomas Nagel thinks that one’s authority to confer objective value is limited to one’s ‘own inner states and the conditions that determine what living [one’s] life is like’ (Korsgaard, 2010: 285). But what if I am a mad fascist who cannot rest or be content until the citizens of England are all white? This would count as something a ‘condition that determine[s] what living [my] life is like’. Korsgaard has a different response to the fascist-problem (Korsgaard, 1996. See ‘The reasons we share’). Instead of me saying to you, “help me get what I value because you ought to value it too”, Korsgaard thinks that on a proper account of value, I would say “help me get what I value because with my humanity, my ability to set ends for myself, I have decided to value this *and you ought to value my humanity*”. Korsgaard calls these reasons inter-subjective. I think that Korsgaard draw the limits to our authority in conferring value as follows. We can refuse to value some people’s goals because they conflict with respect for humanity. I need not, ought not, value a murderer’s ends because the reason I *would* do so is to respect his humanity. But his ends do not respect humanity. But this just presupposes that Korsgaard’s conclusion that humanity must be valued is correct. Let us turn to this presently. But on this point, whilst finding a criteria that defines which valuations create value is tricky, this seems a promising account of value, and undermines realism.

The second issue is more serious, and whether or not Korsgaard can deal with our first issue depends on her response to this. Korsgaard, I think, has shown that we must value *our own* humanity. But she moves from this to argue that we *must* value humanity. How do we get from valuing ourselves to valuing others? I am not alone in seeing this as the most problematic move in Korsgaard's theory; G.A. Cohen confesses that he does not understand Korsgaard's argument (Korsgaard, 2010: 167-188). Note that the problem here is not being *able* to value humanity without a contradiction. What is at stake is whether we are *bound* to value humanity. In Korsgaard's above argument, why can't we stop at premise 3, valuing ourselves?

One option is to say that if you value something, you must value it wherever you find it [1]. It would be absurd to value some brand of chocolate only if it was bought in a certain supermarket. Such an argument will not work. I value my spare time, by the above argument I am obliged to value spare time wherever I find it. So I must equally value your spare time. But your spare time is not mine. Spare time is not one homogenous thing, but its value changes depending on whose it is. We are not obliged to value others' spare time at all. Similarly, we are not obliged to value humanity wherever we find it.

The option Korsgaard opts for is to shun the assumption that reasons are private. Much moral philosophy has been built on the premise that we each have our own *private* reasons for action, and what moral philosophy must explore is whether we have reason to bridge the gap to public reasons. Korsgaard thinks that this is misguided. She describes a case of the student who goes to her tutor and asks if she can arrange a meeting. They reason *together* to find a solution. We *can* share reasons and normally *do*. But Raymond Geuss sees the shift from these unproblematic observations to the conclusion that we *must* share reasons and value one another's humanity as illegitimate (Korsgaard, 1996: 198). Similarly, Cohen thinks that 'no reason emerges for the conclusion that I must treat human beings, as such, as valuable' (ibid: 186). Cohen thinks that in ditching Kant's focus on reason and arguing for

a humanised source of morality, Korsgaard cannot come to the kind of conclusions Kant does. She cannot conclude that we *must* value humans on pain of irrationality. Cohen thinks this largely because he thinks Korsgaard is asking a question that cannot be answered. The question is: *why must everyone* be moral? Rather than ‘is being moral *one* rational option?’ Cohen sees Korsgaard’s theory, and perhaps anyone’s, as incapable of answering the first question.

4. Taking Stock

We have explored the two key theories that try to make sense of how humans can be said to be valuable. Realism throws up many problems. The problem with Korsgaard’s theory is that we struggle to go from the conclusion that I must value my own humanity to the conclusion that I must value humanity full stop. Neither account has been found to be obviously correct or completely wrong. Some comparisons will help us decide between them and their explanations of why we are valuable.

5. Comparisons of Realism and Constructivism

5.1. The Nature of Value

Realism and Constructivism have different accounts of what value is. Realists see value as “out there”. Our job as moral agents is to *discover* that value. Constructivists see this as a mistake. They claim that value is not part of the fabric of the universe. If humans and non-human animals were wiped out, there would be no such thing as value. Nothing has inherent value in nature. Value is imposed on the world. It is created in acts of *valuation*.

Against realism, it would also seem odd to say that orange juice is valuable in the absence of any creatures with taste buds or a need for nutrition. However, on some forms of realism

including the one explored above, a situation of value existing in a world without creatures is not possible, as nothing would have the capacity for pain. Still, the constructivist picture is simpler and does not raise difficult questions such as: How do we come to know that something is valuable? Yet, as highlighted above, Korsgaard's promising method of dismissing fascists conferring value on bad things just begs the question as to whether humans are valuable.

5.2. Avoiding the metaphysical* demands of realism

A second comparison concerns the philosophical burden that comes with defending the theories. Constructivism is more economical; it purports to achieve explaining objective moral obligations without invoking moral facts or inherently normative entities.

This point would hold were it clear that constructivism actually avoids realism. But constructivists may not be able to avoid telling a realist story about why their moral procedure is the objectively correct one. How do we know which procedure is correct? Either their procedures involve moral presuppositions or they do not. If the procedure makes no moral presuppositions, Shafer-Landau thinks that we are placing an unjustifiable amount of hope in the procedure. If, on the other hand, the procedure does involve moral ideas, what validates them? For instance, John Rawls assumes that persons are "free and equal" when he constructs his famous procedure for deciding what is just (Rawls, 1999). This is a moral presupposition. What can stand behind that moral claim, given that the whole point of constructivism is that it does not invoke entities like natural moral properties? Korsgaard admits that 'there is a trivial sense in which everyone who thinks that ethics isn't hopeless is a realist' (Korsgaard, 2010: 35). She argues that 'procedural realism', the view that there is a right process for establishing ethical facts, is needed to avoid nihilism, but does not require the existence of normative entities (Korsgaard, 2010: 36).

5.3. Unconditional reasons for action

Moral realism has no trouble in accounting for the existence of reasons for action that in no way depend on one's current set of desires. If humans are valuable, then a whole raft of obligations follow that exist independently of what we think.

As we have seen, Korsgaard faces objections when trying to conclude that we are obliged to value humanity. Bridging the gap from valuing our own humanity looks very hard. Cohen sees it as impossible. So if we want to reach the conclusion that we are all obligated to observe the value of humanity, realism is more attractive.

6. Conclusions

Korsgaard's theory is one step off being very, very plausible. The only large issue is bridging the gap between valuing our own humanity and valuing others.

In favour of our form of realism, pain seems to be a normative thing. But a key tenet of realism, that value is already "out there", is less plausible than the Kantian account that it is constructed by humans.

Neither account is perfect. Moral realism, if true, would enable us to argue that humans are valuable independently of the human perspective. Constructivism relies on fewer questionable metaphysical premises. It is more plausible but its results are problematic; we may not be able to argue that one *must* value humans or has obligations as a matter of objective fact. But here is the good news: there are some promising accounts of the value of humans. So perhaps we don't have to be nihilists; there are at least some answers to the questions with which I opened. Maybe we are not valueless after all.

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8. Appendix: Philosophical glossary

Autonomy 'Auto' means self and 'Nomy' comes from 'nomos', or rule or law. So autonomy is to rule one's self. Kant uses this term a lot. He thinks that freedom and morality are inextricably linked. To be free is to be moral. Freedom is autonomy, and autonomy leads us to impose moral laws on ourselves.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was a German philosopher during the Enlightenment. He is a founding father of the deontological moral tradition. He is also, purportedly, a constructivist. His great contribution to philosophy was his rejection of our ability to know things as they are in and of themselves. He instead turned to humans to explain things. Experience without some way of understanding it would be unintelligible. Humans, he thought, have a set of concepts (e.g. space, time) that we have from birth and that are prerequisites to understanding experience. In the realm of ethics, value must come from humans not objects in themselves. Kant thought that morality was about reasoning. It applies to all rational beings. Kant emphasises reason and not experience, as the ethical guide.

Foundations of morality/meta-ethics Meta-ethics is a subdiscipline of ethics. Metaethics is concerned with the problem: 'What does it mean to say that something is morally right/wrong?'

or 'What is the truth-maker in ethical statements?' 'What stands behind ethical judgements, and makes them right, wrong, or neither?'

Metaphysics is a central field in philosophy. 'Meta' means beyond, and 'physics' is concerned with the nature of reality. Metaphysics is philosophy's attempt at uncovering the fundamental nature of reality. It is the philosophical way of thinking about scientific matters. What does it mean to say that an object at 1pm is the same object at 2pm? What is the mind? Is time an objective thing or our way of interpreting the world? These are metaphysical questions.

'They think that moral judgements cannot possibly be true or false': **Non-cognitivism**. In metaethics (see above) there are two clusters of theories. 'Cognitivism' is the view that moral statements such as 'it is wrong to cheat on one's partner in most scenarios' can be true or false, like other statements can be, such as 'it is 9:59am' or 'this table is made up of atoms'. 'Non-cognitivism' denotes a cluster of theories, whose commonality is that moral judgements are just not the kind of thing that can be rendered true or false. Non-cognitivists often compare moral statements to expressions like 'Boooo' and 'Hurrah', things which cannot be true or false. In writing this article, I do not let the cognitivist theories I examine get away with assumptions, but I must confess that I do not explore the possibility that moral statements such as 'humans have value' are merely emotion with no possibility of being rendered true or false.

Normative Whenever the word 'ought' is used, the idea of normativity is usually lurking. Normative questions are questions of what ought to be the case. It is often contrasted with 'description', or what is the case.

Normative moral philosophy The question that normative ethics asks is: 'What is right?' Theories within normative ethics include utilitarianism: 'the morally right action maximises happiness'. Or deontological ethics: 'the morally right action fulfils one's duties'. This subfield of philosophy concerns the principles, rules, or ways in which we can talk about right and wrong.

9. Endnotes

[1] This tack is important to note, as others (e.g. Gewirth) have used it. Korsgaard argues that this is logically flawed. All this argument can convince us of is that I must see your reasons as normative for *you* on pain of contradiction. I am not bound to see them as normative for me.

[2] The example of a contradiction in will is from:

https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Alexander_Pruss/www/1308/Kant1.html

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