

The background is a classical painting, likely a detail from Raphael's 'The School of Athens'. It shows a woman in a white and gold robe on the left, looking upwards. In the center, a man with a white beard and a blue and white robe is gesturing with his hands. On the right, a man with a dark beard and a white and purple robe stands with his arms crossed. The scene is set against a background of other figures and architectural elements, all rendered in a soft, classical style with a muted color palette.

Metaethics

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Does Might Make Right?

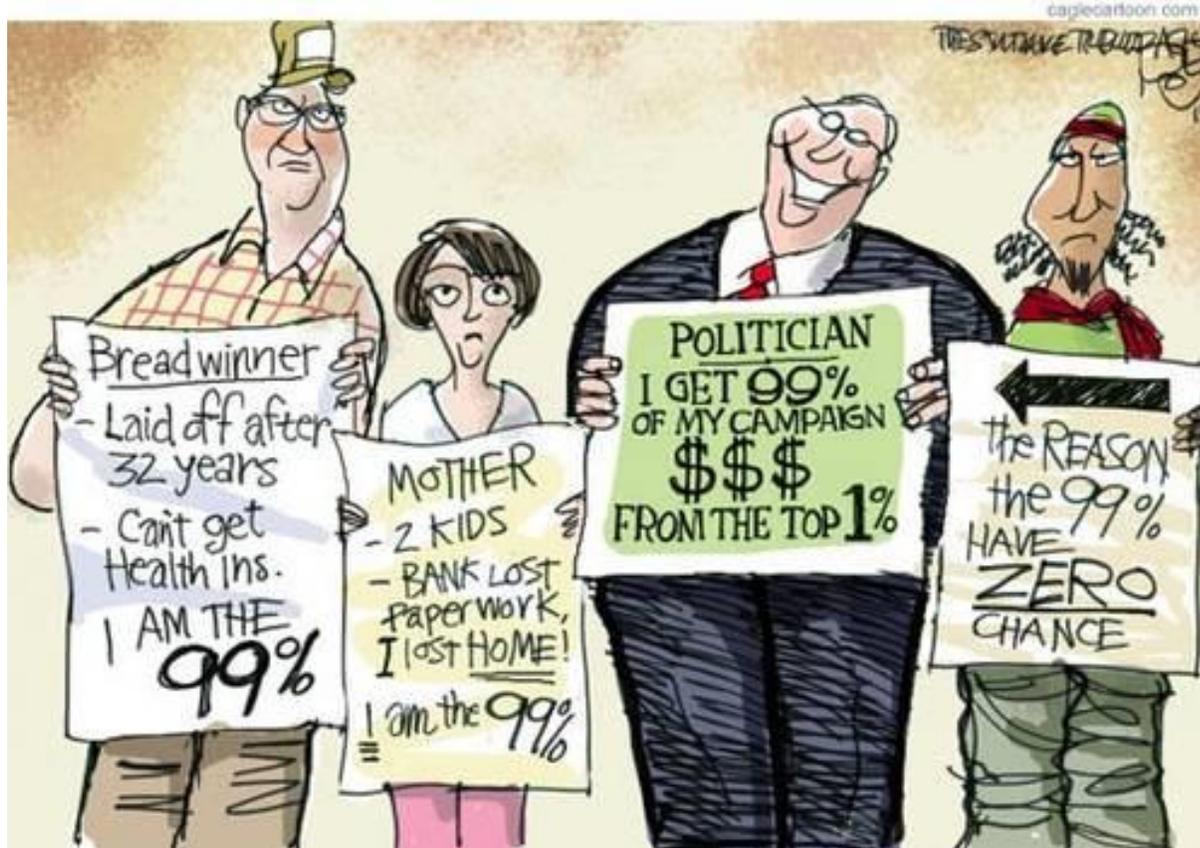
Might makes right or Might is right is an aphorism on the origin of morality, with both descriptive and prescriptive senses. – Wikipedia

Max Weber: the study of morality is the study of power



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Might_makes_right
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/#DomLeg>

The (New) Golden Rule



“Whoever has the gold makes the rules.”

<http://whatwouldjackdo.net/2011/10/remember-the-golden-rule-he-who-has-the-gold-makes-the-rules.html>

Cover image:

<https://www.massolit.io/courses/met-aethics-do-moral-reasons-exist>

Types of Ethics

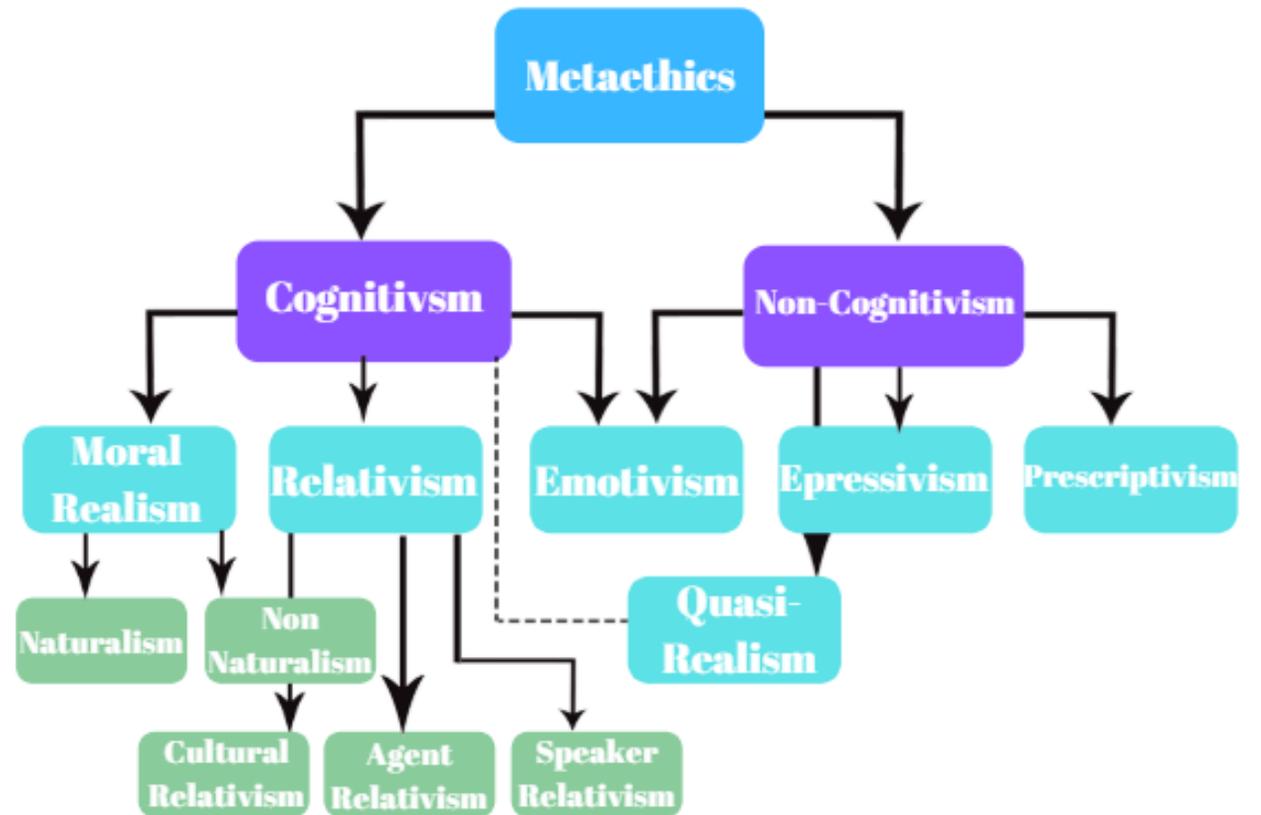
1. Descriptive: People tend to make decisions which bring pleasure or avoid pain.
2. Normative: The moral decision is that which enhances wellbeing and limits suffering.
3. Analytic: Morality is simply a system for helping humans stay happy and alive.



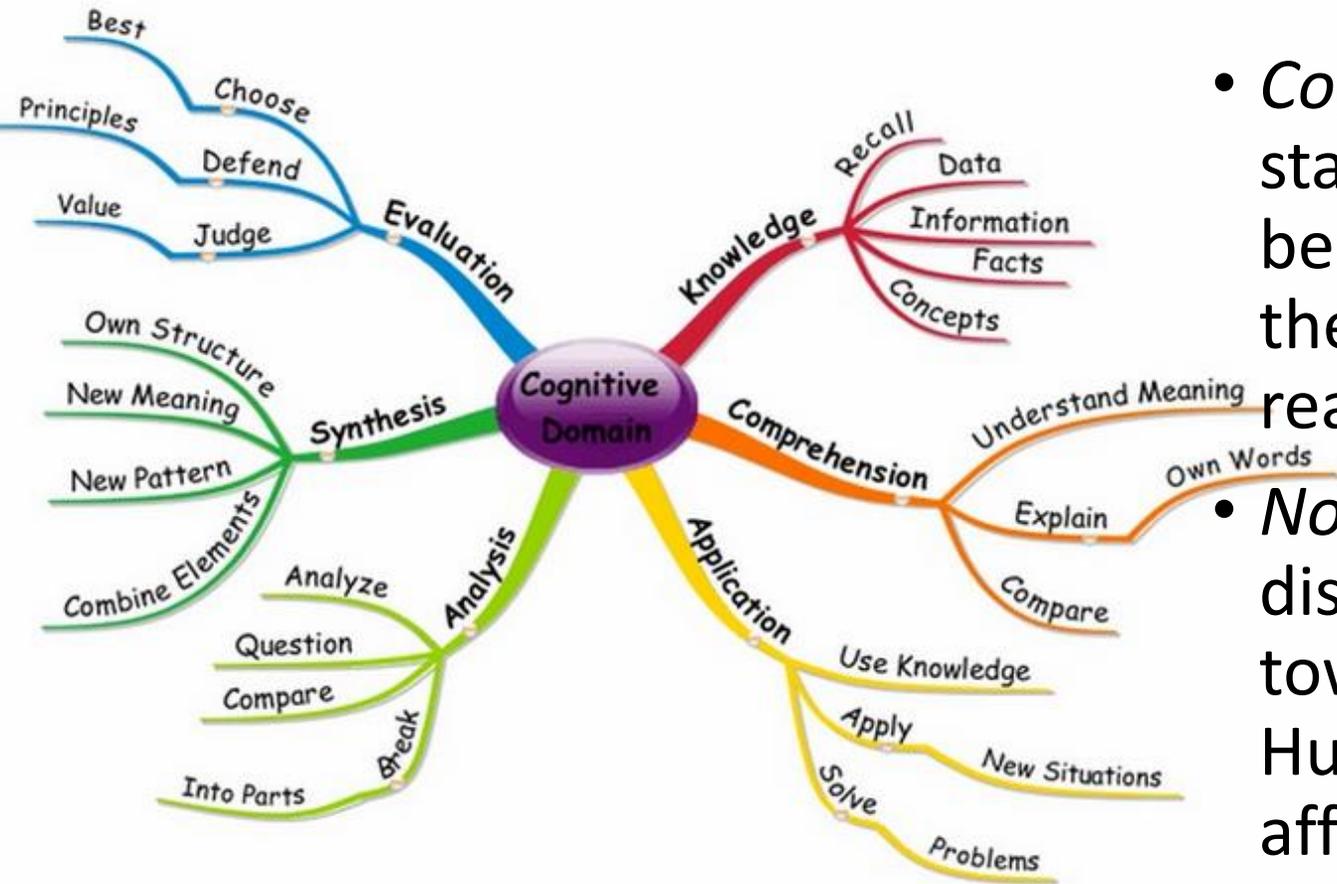
Metaethics

The study of meta-ethics is the study of what grounds an ethical argument.

After reflection on the different theories, it is relevant to ask about the bases or grounds for one approach or another.



Cognitivism



- *Cognitivism* is the idea that “moral statements have the capability of being objectively true or false since they are descriptive of some external reality in the world”
- *Non-Cognitivism* “views moral discourse as a way to express attitudes towards certain actions.” For example, Hume “assigns moral distinctions to affect/emotional appeal.”

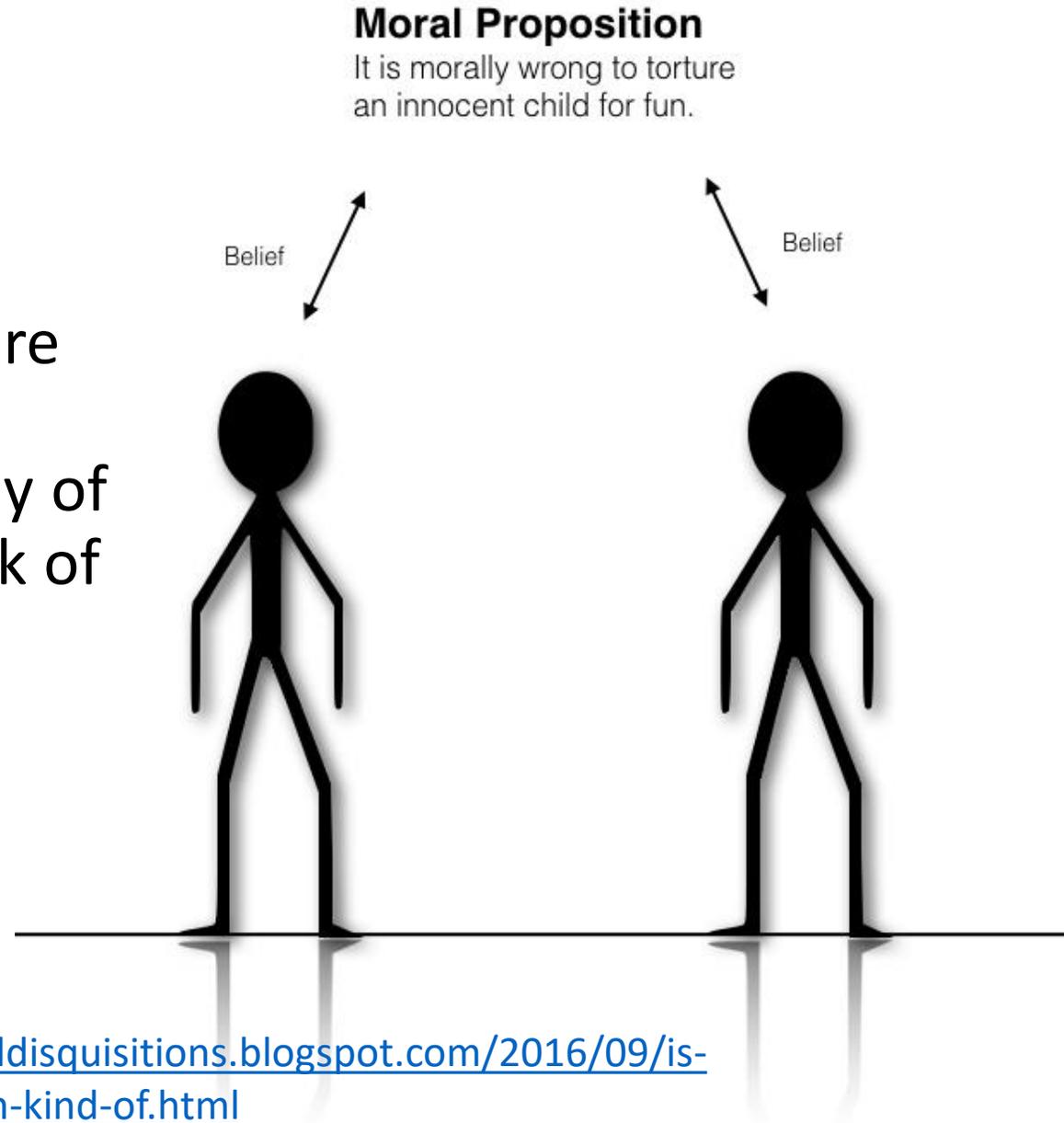
<https://conscientthoughts.wordpress.com/2019/06/10/lets-get-meta-about-metaethics/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWuzk1ZigcU>

Image: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/teachinginadigitalagev2/chapter/3-3-cognitivism/>

Realism

The idea that moral ideas are true or false independently of what we think of them



<https://philosophicaldisquisitions.blogspot.com/2016/09/is-robust-moral-realism-kind-of.html>

Robust Moral Realism

Non-naturalism

1

The moral proposition is *irreducibly normative*, i.e. it cannot be reduced to natural, non-moral facts.

Objectivism

2

The truth of the moral proposition is attitude-independent (i.e. independent of moral beliefs and moral seemings)

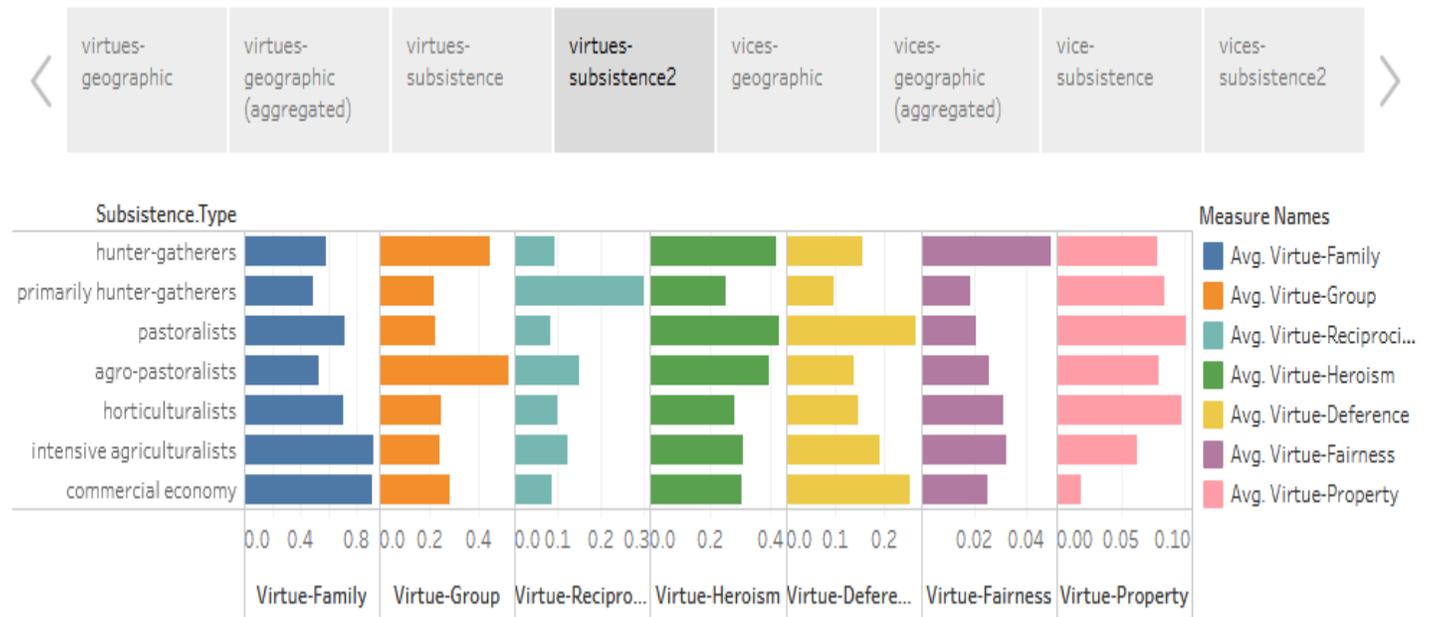
Optimism

3

We believe that our deepest moral beliefs are true.

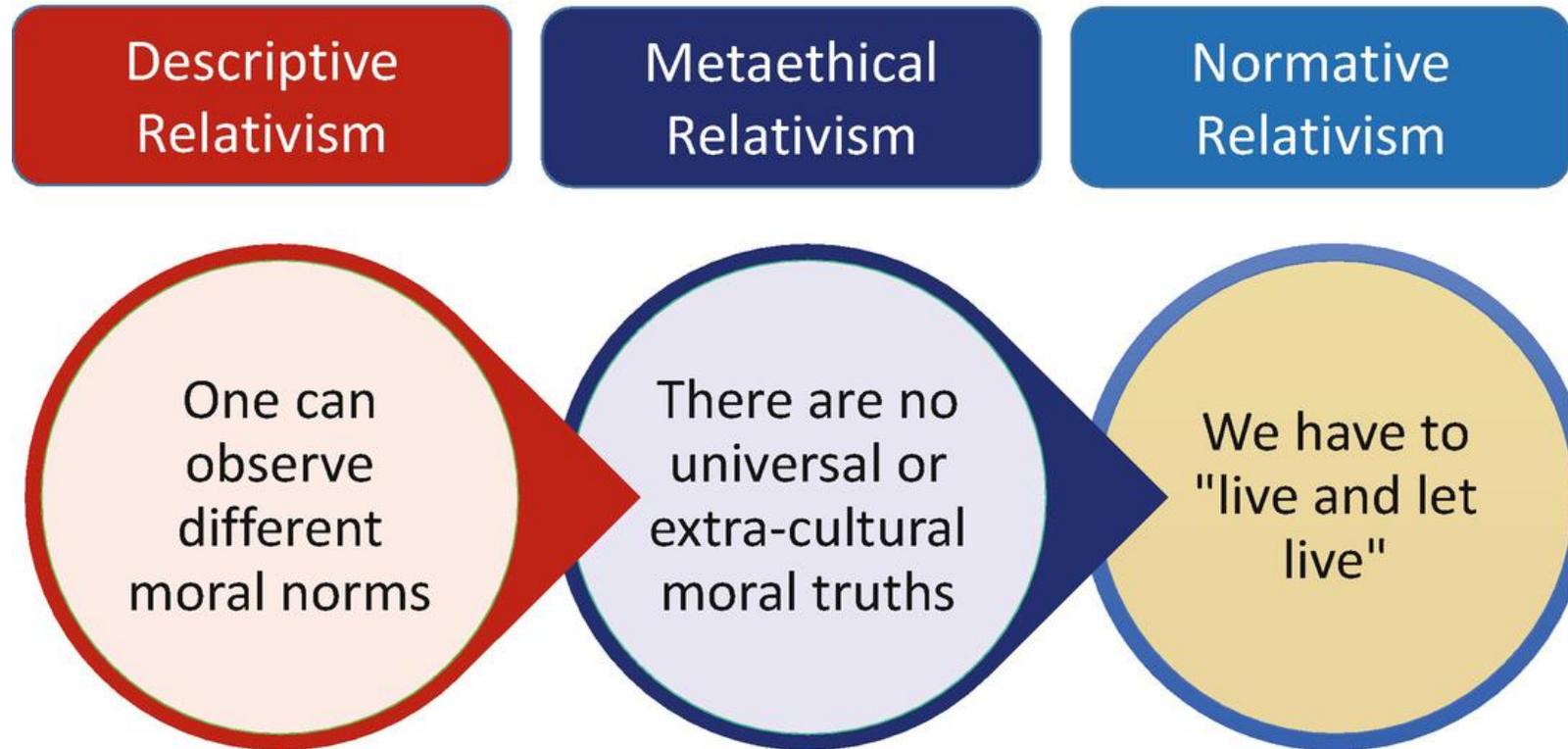
Moral Universalism

- Descriptive: there is one universal morality shared by all cultures
- Prescriptive: at least, there *should* be



<https://public.tableau.com/profile/mark.alfano#!/vizhome/Virtuesandvicesfromtheperspectivesof256cultures/Virtuesandvicesaroundtheworld>

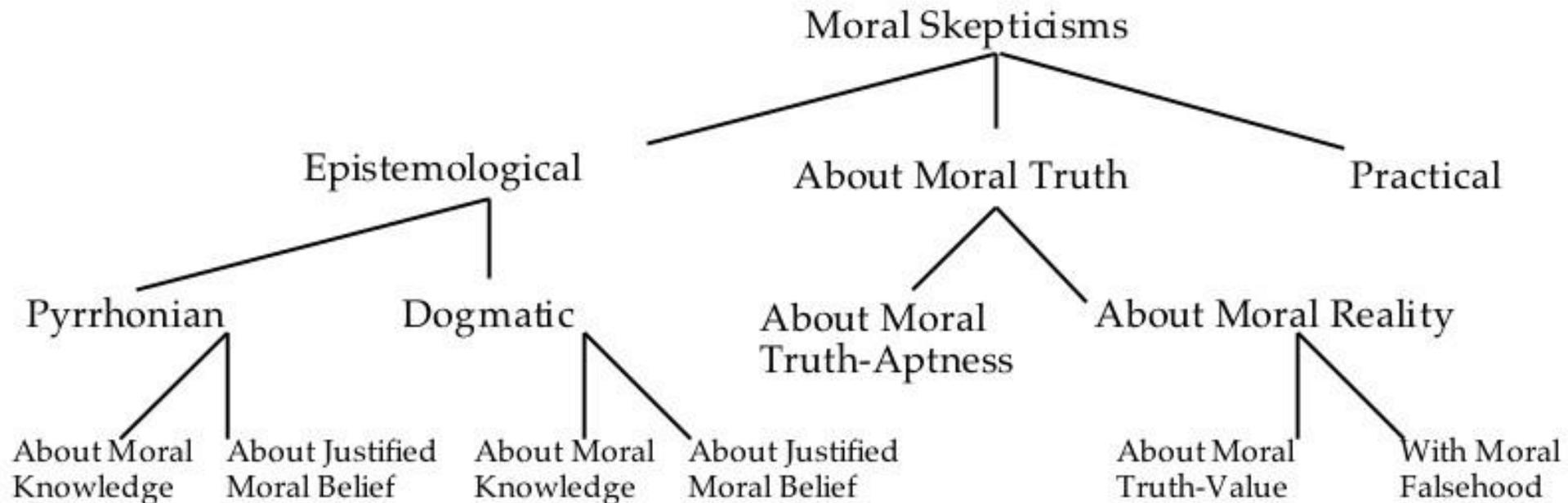
Relativism



Relativism is the idea that, one way or another, there are no *universal* moral truths

Moral Scepticism

We can't know about morality, one way or another.



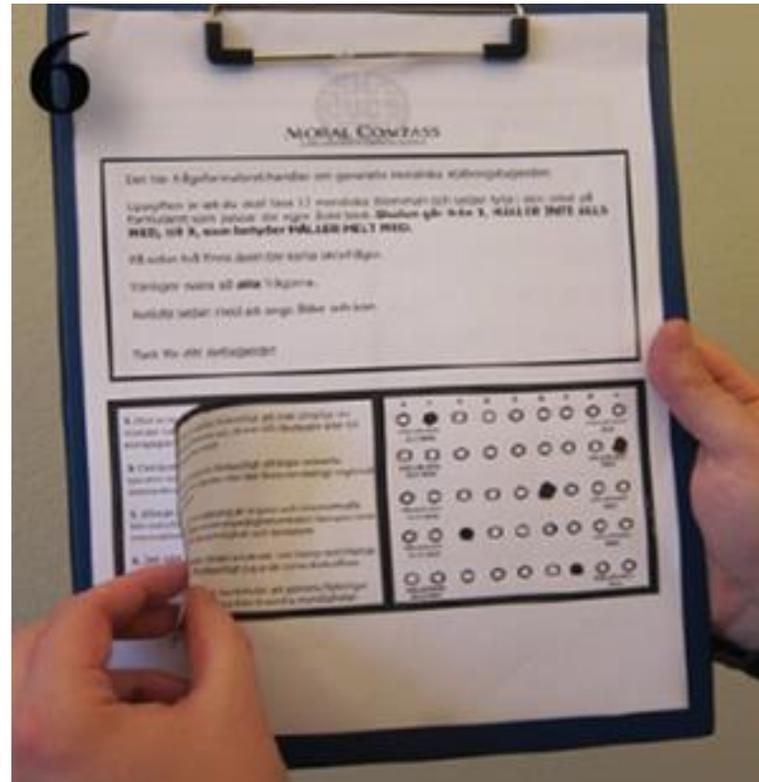
Moral Choice?



Why is ethics always presented to us in the form of 'making decisions'? Is morality even a choice we can make?

Moral Rationalization

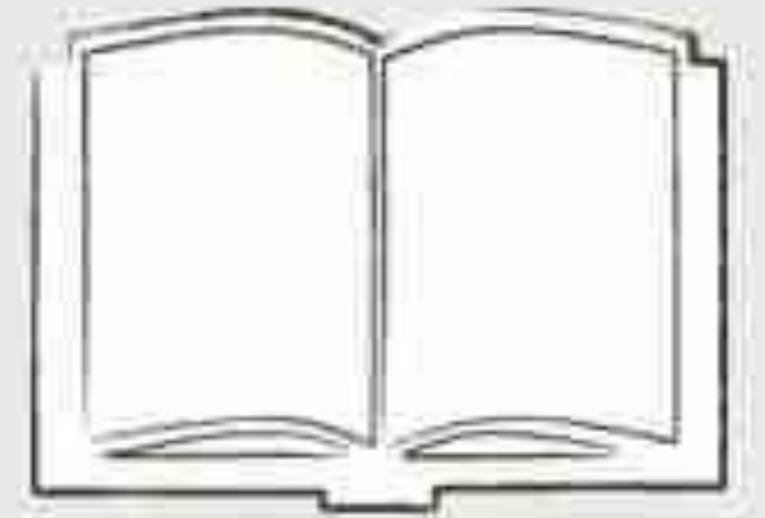
“participants often constructed coherent and unequivocal arguments supporting the opposite of their original position. These results suggest a dramatic potential for flexibility in our moral attitudes”



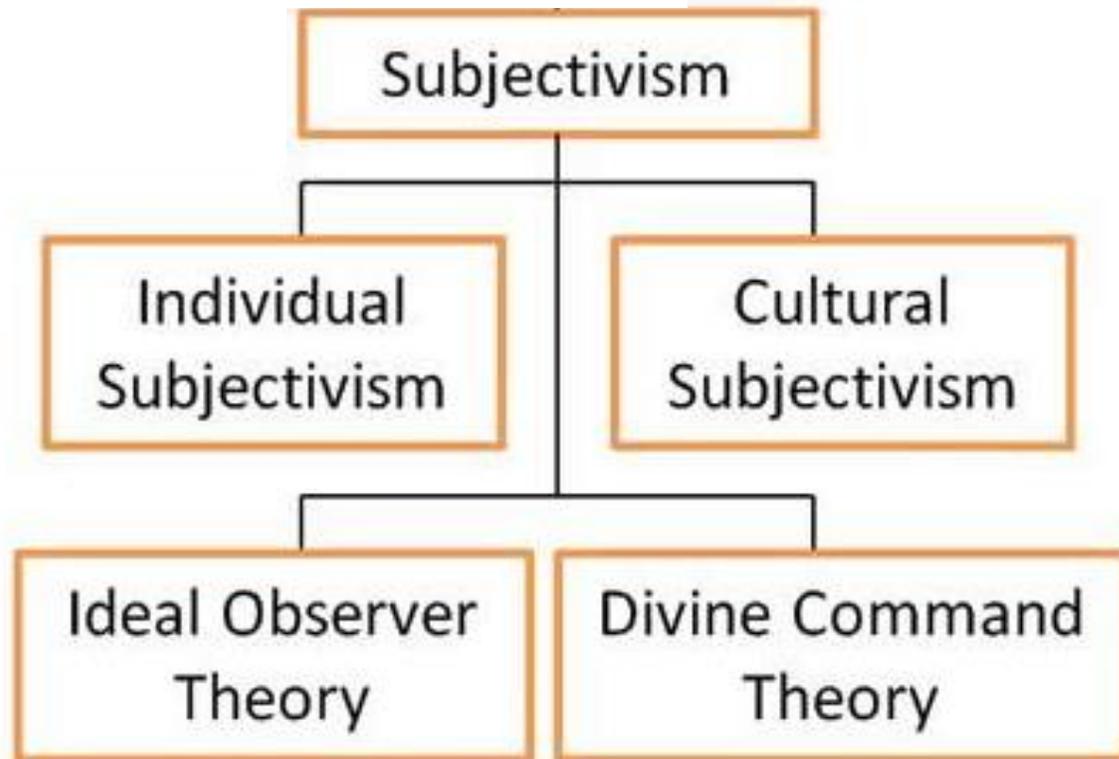
Non-Cognitivism

Expresses or describes *attitudes* to moral statements

- For example, “I find the idea of hunting cats *distasteful*”
- Branches: emotivism, prescriptivism, expressivism
 - Emotivism – expresses a moral judgement
 - Prescriptivism – attempts to influence others
 - Expressivism – expresses a feeling, e.g., of disgust



Subjectivism



Ethical truth depends on perspective or point of view

Euthyphro Dilemma:
Is something moral because God decided so or because it independently is?

Moral Sentiment

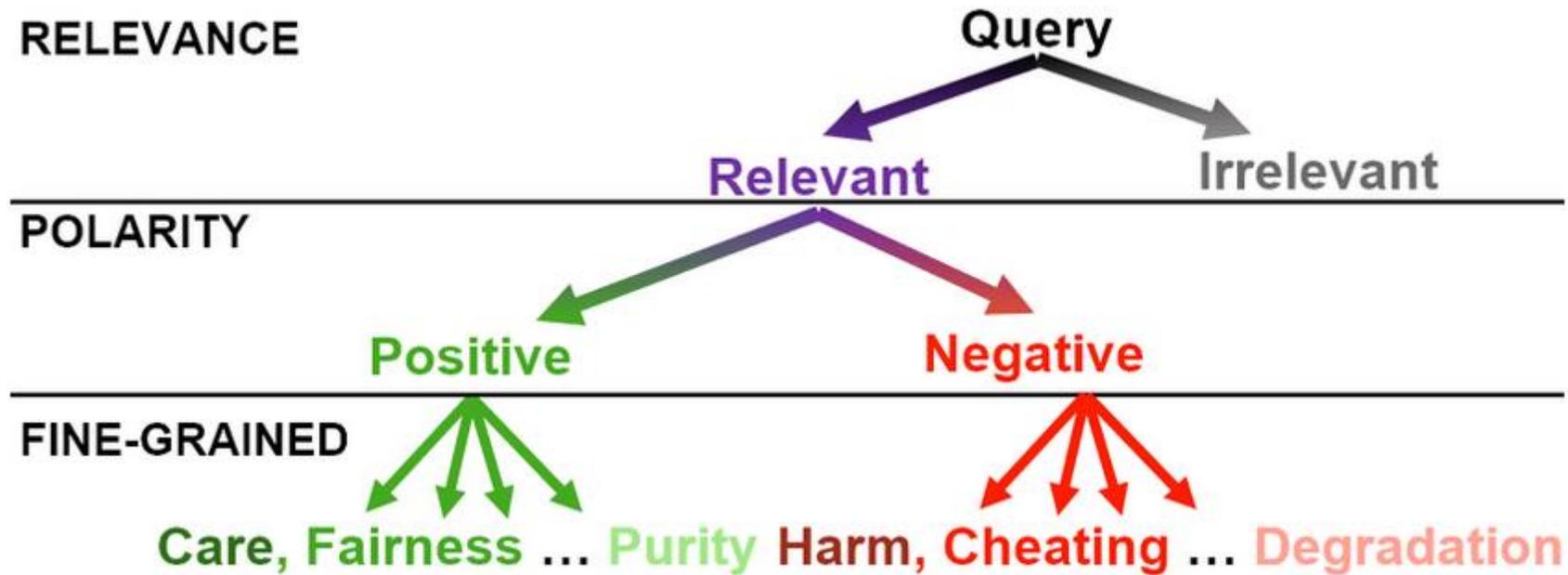
Reason alone cannot persuade us to act - “reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions,” he writes. (Hume, 1739, II.3.3) “Truth is disputable; not taste: What exists in the nature of things is the standard of our judgment; what each man feels within himself is the standard of sentiment.” (Hume, 1751, 1.5)



<https://www.berfrois.com/2011/04/moral-sentiment-politics-human-rights/>

Inferring moral Sentiment

E.g. a text-based framework for investigating moral sentiment change of the public



<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336995590> Text-based inference of moral sentiment change

Who Owns Ethics?

- Scientific Virtues
 - “scientists invoke theoretical virtues explicitly, albeit rather infrequently, when they talk about models”
- Business Ethics
 - “real concerns and real-world problems of the vast majority of managers”
- Silicon Valley Ethics
 - Metcalf, Moss & boyd: “broader and longer-standing industry commitments to meritocracy, technological solutionism, and market fundamentalism”

etc

<https://philpapers.org/archive/MIZTVI.pdf>

<https://hbr.org/1993/05/whats-the-matter-with-business-ethics>

<https://datasociety.net/library/owning-ethics-corporate-logics-silicon-valley-and-the-institutionalization-of-ethics/>