

# Theory

Aspects of this position

Summary of the position

Criticisms

# Prescriptivism

“You ought to do X” is a universalisable prescription - an instruction, not a fact.

You need to be informed, imaginative and consistent.

There are no objective moral truths, but some moral claims are self-contradictory.

When making statements about morality, we need to be consistent, imagining ourselves on the receiving end. We should want everyone to behave as we have prescribed.

There is more to moral statements than consistency - there are objective moral truths!

Hitler wasn't wrong just because his views were *inconsistent* - what he did was evil, not illogical.

## Intuitionism

“Good” is indefinable.

Basic moral truths are self-evident to a mature mind.

There are objective moral truths.

You can't *prove* moral truths (just like you can't prove that the physical world exists) - you just **know**.

Moral truths are vague, and have exceptions. This is not like '1+1=2'.

People don't agree about basic moral truths - we all have different intuitions.

Moral intuitions are often a result of upbringing - e.g. eating meat, slavery etc.

What can you do if two people disagree about moral issues? There is no way of knowing whose intuitions to trust.

## Emotivism

“X is good” is an emotional exclamation. It doesn't mean any more than saying “Wahey X!”

There are no objective moral truths.

You should pick your moral principles by following your feelings.

You can't say moral statements are 'true' or 'false' because they can't be proved, they're just how we feel.

The theory itself can't be proved, so by its own reasoning it is meaningless.

Some moral statements aren't at all emotional (e.g. we should pay our taxes).

This theory prevents any moral debate - we can't claim Hitler was wrong.