

“In truth, the concept of value is the expression of a genuine philosophical embarrassment that impels us to undertake philosophical self-reflection” (Gadamer 1971, 59).

Interpretive Metaethics: Hermeneutics’ Neglected Contribution to Ethical Theory

This paper examines the neglected contribution of philosophical hermeneutics to ethical theory. What is the place of interpretation in moral philosophy? What are the implications of interpretive understanding for moral understanding? Developing the notion of “Interpretive Metaethics,” I explore two central ideas: (1) that moral judgments are best understood as interpretations of meaning, and (2) that a hermeneutic approach to ethics supports, rather than undermines, moral realism. To counter the idea that moral language is merely a tool for describing independent moral facts, it is argued that moral interpretation shapes and alters moral intelligibility itself.

There is wide disagreement on the ethical implications of the hermeneutic tradition. I will not address that debate here. My interest is, first, to point out an ambivalence in contemporary Western moral self-understanding, and, second, to show that philosophical hermeneutics has strong resources for addressing this issue. One of the most salient features of Western morality is the experience that some acts are really wrong, such as torturing children or oppressing women. Can we imagine a situation in which inflicting pain on children is acceptable? Don’t we believe it is truly better when girls receive education and women are allowed to work, while this is forbidden in contemporary Afghanistan? These examples indicate that some views and acts strike us as objectively wrong, not just because people think them wrong, as exemplified by social change movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter, and the Western indignation over Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the numerous civilian casualties in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

This attitude toward moral truth is very common. It is a perfectly ordinary idea that some acts are wrong in themselves, not just because people think them wrong. One of the central questions in moral philosophy is the question about the metaphysical status of such ordinary moral judgments, where the metaethical debate is about the issue whether there is a moral reality which our judgments seek to represent. The traditional answer has been that moral reality exists and that at least some moral judgments are objectively true. The past century, however, skepticism and critique about objective value have become much more extensive both inside and outside academia. Paradoxically, Western moral self-understanding seems characterized not only by a strong commitment to objective value, but also by a sense of suspicion about that very commitment.

One reason for this predicament is cultural: due to a history of scientification and secularization, contemporary moral identity has become “disenchanted” (Weber 1919; Gauchet 1985). Within a disenchanted world, it proves to be increasingly difficult to understand, or explain, or even *articulate* the experience of objective value: traditional visions of a Higher Moral Order have lost their hold on many people in the West, while purely scientific explanations of morality have so far convinced only a minority. Another source of suspicion about objective value is the liberal commitment to value pluralism: the acceptance of many different values, cultures, and identities. While Western moral identity would be unrecognizable without them, pluralism and disenchantment do not fit well with the experience of objective value. This paper starts from the observation that this predicament cannot be captured by the familiar metaethical debate on moral facts and properties because it invokes a deeper issue: the question of how we understand *ourselves* as moral subjects, our moral self-understanding.

How to understand our commitment to objective value and the sense of suspicion that seems to surround it? What reality are we referring to when saying that some acts are “really” wrong? Rethinking these questions, I explore the prospects of a hermeneutic approach to ethics, which means (1) reconceptualizing moral judgments as interpretations of meaning rather than descriptions of facts; and (2) reconceptualizing moral realism. The intended result of this conceptual reworking, “Interpretive Metaethics,” is a historically informed yet objective view of morality that respects contextual differences while still allowing for normative critique. In so arguing, Interpretive Metaethics makes sense of the fact that the experience of objective value expresses itself differently in different human lives, as human experience is shaped by cultural-historical contexts, social-political environments, and interpretive narratives (Heidegger 1927; Gadamer 1975; Ricoeur 1981; Taylor 1985a,b). However, in both metaethics and normative ethics, interpretation, as a more general notion, is often taken for granted rather than being interrogated or elaborated upon – either by abstracting from the particularities of normative debates to ask about the presuppositions and commitments shared by those who engage in the debate (metaethics) or by investigating the moral principles underlying these debates (normative ethics). The idea of defending moral realism while acknowledging different experiences of objective value by having recourse to hermeneutics is largely unexplored terrain.

Moral judgments as interpretations of meaning

In its raw form, Interpretive Metaethics revolves around the thought that metaethics needs to put its questions back into the substantive normative context from which they originate, normative theorizing back into the cultural-historical narratives that inspired it, and narrative interpretation back into the world of ordinary human self-understanding. The idea behind this view is misleadingly simple: moral judgments are not about facts, but about meanings. Scientific statements refer to empirical facts. Mathematical insights are based on certain axioms. Conceptual truths are grounded in our use of language. But if we want to explain why the behavior of rapists, racists, and war criminals *is* wrong, then we will have to give an interpretation of moral meaning. While taking hermeneutics into the domain of metaethics might seem far-fetched – and the aim of combining culturally sensitive and realist thinking in ethics even more so – this approach is motivated by the sense that terms such as “objective value” and “moral realism” have been widely misunderstood.

The mainstream debate on the experience of objective value takes place in metaethics. One major question which metaethical theories seek to answer is whether moral beliefs involve certain facts about value which our judgments seek to represent. Realists argue that moral judgments can be true or false because there are objective facts about value. The internal debate among moral realists is polarized between two main approaches: “naturalistic” realisms that aim to reduce our judgments to scientific facts of the natural world (cf. Railton 2003; Copp 2007) and “non-naturalistic” realisms that invoke non-scientific facts to explain the nature of value (cf. Shafer-Landau 2003; FitzPatrick 2008). Many philosophers, however, do not believe such “moral facts” exist, neither in the sense that they can be read from empirical data nor that there is any other metaphysical state of the world that can make moral judgments true. We must, therefore, understand our judgments in some different way: as a fundamental error or illusion (Mackie 1977), as a projection (Blackburn 1993), as an expression of emotions or attitudes (Gibbard 1990; Timmons 1999), or as part of our nature as rational agents (Rawls 1985; Korsgaard 1996). This skepticism about moral facts has deep implications. Since there are no objective facts to match our judgments, the thought goes, there is no objective truth about value either – even when ordinary moral reactions *seem* to suggest a kind of objectivity and reality (“Rape is just wrong!” “Human rights must be universally respected!”).

While the mainstream debate is about the issue of whether we can make sense of the experience of objective value without invoking moral facts, I argue that moral judgments are less about descriptions of facts than about interpretations of meaning. To see how foregrounding meaning takes the cause of metaethics in a new direction, we may contrast descriptions of facts, where what we talk about has an existence independent of the language with which we talk about it, with interpretations of meaning, which *shape* the objects they seek to articulate. For example, in interpreting my situation, an initially vague “bad feeling” caused by some sort of “abuse” emerges as a recognizably distinct experience of “sexism” or “racism” when we find the right words, invoking not just unease but feelings of “shame,” “humiliation,” and “anger.” Describing my situation with terms like “sexism” and “shameful” inflects my sense of meaning in a new direction. This means: unlike descriptive knowledge, such as “Water is H₂O,” our learning new meaning through interpretation changes its nature. Understanding my situation as being a victim of sexist behavior is quite different from understanding water: it does not stay the same regardless of how it is understood. On the contrary, it *changes*, both the interpreted meaning and the actual felt experience becomes something different. An inarticulate bad feeling resurfaces as a clear experience of sexist abuse, causing shame, humiliation, anger or whatever. As Charles Taylor puts this point:

Prior to the articulation, the as yet unnamed import may be felt in a diffuse, unfocused way, a pressure that we can’t yet respond to. After articulation, it becomes part of the explicit shape of meaning for us. As a result it is felt differently; our experience is changed; it has a more direct bearing on our lives. [...] Articulation here alters the shape of what matters to us. It changes us (Taylor 2016, 189).

Moral judgments as interpretations of meaning not only describe some normative feature of the world (actions, persons, policies) but further reflect on us as being part of that world. When I come to understand my initial agitated state as “shame” or “anger,” I am already living it differently. I have taken the first step out of confusion; my situation already has a shape for me. I may initially convince myself that my colleague just has a different sense of humor, but I can always ask: Are sexist jokes really consistent with that? Asking such questions is by no means arbitrary. As self-interpreting beings, we are looking for the *right* words to describe our situation. We want to know, in other words, what the world is really like: my colleague’s behavior *is* sexist. To conclude this point, interpretations of meaning are not just object-referring in claiming objective rightness. They are object-shaping. This means: our capacity for interpretation at the same time reveals and reshapes the nature of moral reality itself. To clarify just how this constitutive force occurs and the transformative shapes it can take is at the heart of developing a hermeneutic approach to ethics.

Beyond metaphysical embarrassment

However, the constitutive force of interpretation seems to evaporate in an account of moral facts. For example, when we judge that “rape is always wrong,” the mainstream realist would insist that such articulations are only an epistemic issue: they concern only *our* human views about what the moral facts are. This means: however articulate we may be, the facts themselves – the metaphysics – remain the same, also when our understanding about them changes. In this sense, moral facts are beyond further explanation and justification.

To clarify this view, Shafer-Landau makes it clear that being a moral realist just *is* to be committed to a set of “brute” facts for which no further explanation is available, as a basic metaphysical reality: values just are “a brute fact about the way the world works” and there may not be much more to say (Shafer-Landau 2003, 48). In FitzPatrick’s terms, moral facts express the “inherent value ladenness” of the world in a way that “certain elements of the world just *are*

value laden in this way, as a basic metaphysical fact about them, and that there may not be anything more for philosophy to say here” (FitzPatrick 2008, 196-197). And while non-naturalist realists tirelessly insist on the intuition that moral properties are “just too different” from empirical ones to be a mere subset of them, Enoch admits that beyond “merely *insisting* on the just-too-different-intuition” there is no *positive* argument that can be offered to clarify the nature of moral facts: “I do not have such an argument up my sleeve. Indeed, there is some reason to think that we find ourselves here in a dialectical predicament where no such argument is possible” (Enoch 2011, 105). The implication is that objective values must be understood either as purely abstract objects, perhaps like mathematical entities such as prime numbers (Enoch 2011, 203) or as properties that “inhabit” the world as entities that are there anyway – on a par with “geological or biological properties” (Shafer-Landau 2003, 63).

This kind of metaphysical embarrassment and inarticulacy glosses over altogether the constitutive-transformative power of language on which hermeneutic philosophers insists. Describing moral experience in terms of facts which are there anyway (on a par with mathematical, biological, or geological properties) may bring clarity to the world but it does not *alter* it. By contrast, to return to the earlier example, when I see that the issue which really disturbs me is sexism, I am clear about something which is not independent of my clarified vision. I have clarified my sense of what matters to me, which changes the shape of what matters to me. In Taylor’s terms, the discovery has “motivational force” (2016, 191). This self-transformation can be seen as a step towards truth: the discovery of a new term alters the reality I now understand better. Evidently, the experience of discovery alluded to here is emphatically not like discovering a mathematical theorem, a new animal species or how heat flows from the earth.

The distinction between facts and meanings is of crucial importance to metaethics in general and the realist debate in particular. Foregrounding the notion of meaning opens up a whole new set of concepts to radically reconceptualize the central concerns of metaethics, such as what moral sentences mean, how we know moral judgments are true, or how to justify their truth. What tends to get lost from view in the mainstream debate on moral “facts” and “properties” is the reality that moral truths are not timeless givens but cultural-historical results of a deeply social process of moral articulation and dialogue. Yet while mainstream realism turns away from contextual issues, I argue that it is precisely the insistence on culture and history which can help to overcome the current metaphysical skepticism and embarrassment about objective value. For it is precisely this social background where our objective judgments come from and why moral properties require interpretive understanding (“*Verstehen*”) rather than scientific explanation (“*Erklären*”). Understanding objectivity hermeneutically is to argue that moral truths are not “out there,” ready-made, and freely available, but must be *earned*, developed, and refined by us in a cultural-historical process of ethical emancipation. If this is right, moral truth cannot be approached in the way current metaethics assumes, by understanding our judgments as (purportedly) descriptive claims. Rather, it may require something that contemporary ethical theory tends to leave out altogether: the interpretation of meaning in reaching towards moral growth.

The alternative model I propose is centered on the concept of interpretation. To mark the contrast, “interpretation” is less a discursive act – like describing facts – than a way of *orienting* ourselves; indeed, a way of “being” in a world which is expressive of meanings that are partly constituted by our efforts to articulate them (Heidegger 1927; Taylor 1985a,b). Humans as *Dasein* are essentially “self-interpreting animals.”¹ On this conception,

¹ In addition to Heidegger’s and Taylor’s hermeneutics, the idea of Interpretive Metaethics implicitly builds on central insights from Gadamer (1975) and Ricoeur (1981), even if these authors engage with ethics only haphazardly. Indeed, Gadamer’s diagnosis (1971) of the “philosophical embarrassment about value” in his day perfectly articulates the spirit of the present view. Relatedly, what Ricoeur calls his “little ethics” (1992) is based

philosophical hermeneutics is a form of philosophical anthropology: interpretive understanding is a fundamental way in which humans exist in the world. Extending this view to specifically ethical theorizing is to overcome the very idea of “metaethics,” to the extent that hermeneutics delves deeper into the level preceding the more discursive level at which metaethics begins, that is, at the more advanced meta-level at which we talk about concepts that have already been vocalized and judgments that have already been formed (“Rape is just wrong!”). Yet while these issues have been debated since the interpretive turn in the 20th century, no hermeneutical thinker has so far systematically applied hermeneutic concepts and methods to metaethical questions. Against this, I argue that hermeneutics’ preoccupation with meaning and interpretation as constitutive of metaphysical reality is not a denial of metaethics but a groundbreaking resource for radically reconceptualizing the experience of objective value and overcome the metaphysical skepticism and embarrassment that runs counter to ordinary moral self-understanding.

Interpretive Realism: why context is not the last word

With these points in place, the key challenge is to show how historically constituted interpretations of meaning will help to defend moral *realism*, how the dependence of moral interpretation on social contexts will not land in relativism, and simply restate the paradox from which we began, namely, that we, as disenchanted pluralistic selves, are suspicious about the experience of objective value and tend to avoid strong moral claims, while at the same time embracing objective moral values and making strong moral claims. So, what kind of moral realism emerges from a hermeneutic approach to ethics? Why is “context” not the last word?

The short answer is: moral interpretations track some reality. Much as we may acknowledge the complex history and context of the Israel-Palestine conflict and understand the views of both sides, no one in their right mind would be willing to justify the 7 October kibbutz massacre by Hamas or the retaliatory bombings on Palestinian children by the Israeli army. Quite to the contrary, the worldwide consensus is that such atrocities are utterly wrong and unfounded. Hermeneutics provides a philosophical basis for such global consensus by investigating how the historical development of the social-political debate *alters* the moral reality our interpretive judgments seek to define.

However, this idea easily causes misunderstandings. One misunderstanding must be cleared up from the outset. Defending Interpretive Realism is emphatically not to say that Western history has *made* things like rape wrong, and that it might have been different if our history was different. The claim is the more radical one that the very term “rape” is incomprehensible without considering our Western history, and that this history has *pre-structured* our experience that rape (or slavery, or genocide, or racism, etc.) is objectively wrong: always, everywhere, and for everyone wrong.

Therefore, the insistence on context and history is not in tension with the experience of objective value: it is what *explains* the Western experience that some acts are objectively wrong. Neither is highlighting the historical roots of moral thinking falling prey to cultural relativism: it is what *makes possible* the cross-cultural, normative debate. Being aware of our historical development in the West, and how it has made us embrace what we *now* see as objective values, is not foreclosing but opening the debate on which values are the most fundamental ones across cultures, and which values are so important that everybody should accept them, anywhere in the world.² This is entering the domain of objectivity on realist grounds, albeit in a different

on a hermeneutic anthropology which resembles my guiding notion of moral understanding as essentially self-understanding.

² Indeed, for Gadamer, the “conditionedness of all human being” yields the *possibility*, not the foreclosure, of ethics: “A philosophical ethics that is not only aware of its own questionableness in this way but takes that very

way from mainstream approaches, such as antirealisms (projectivism, error theory), non-metaphysical views (constructivism, pragmatism) and mainstream realisms (naturalist or non-naturalist).

What Interpretive Realism does imply, however, is that normative debates are essentially open-ended. Although lucid interpretations help create moral understanding, this does not mean that in the end some full-grown, perfect, and complete interpretation will exist. This means: moral judgments as interpretations of meaning are reality-tracking but without final completion in a hypothetical “moral theory of everything.” What morality is can never be defined decisively in some ultimate objective foundational theory of moral knowledge. In articulating moral experience, we inescapably move in a circle of being addressed by normative demands and responding to these demands in interpretation. The implication is that we have to be within the circle if we are to have any moral understanding at all: to be a human agent just *is* to be within a circle of meanings and interpretations. The mainstream-realist aspiration for a more robust theory of moral truth can be seen as an attempt to break beyond this circle, by locating moral facts about which we can be so certain that they can be identified free from interpretation. Against this, Interpretive Realism emphasizes that moral meaning does not come to us openly and exposed, ready to be incorporated into maxims, but through often very hazy pre-theoretical experiences of value.

On this conception, “moral reality” is the pattern of moral meanings we live by, the culmination of interpretations, practices, and institutions of a given culture. This reality has a certain shape at any given moment but is at the same time always changing by new ways of understanding and living it. Does it make sense, then, to suppose a best or true moral interpretation, an objective moral reality? My suggestion is “yes,” but only with the Gadamerian caveat that this requires global cross-cultural *dialogue*, not an armchair-philosopher’s debate. Ultimately, taking morality seriously is to take it outside the seminar room. Unlike projects that allow for a finalized self-understanding in some perfect “meta-identity,”³ Interpretive Realism shows why interpretation is never complete, always contestable, and forever provisional, yet contains all the resources we need for getting it right and finding our bearings.

From this perspective, metaethical questions about “the nature of morality” should start from the recognition that “morality” has a *history* which cannot be taken for granted. In this respect, it would be mistaken to think that a timely judgment like “gender discrimination is wrong” is self-evident, a *brute* fact about value, and therefore beyond explanation and justification. To insist on brute facts which have no context or history is to take our values for granted, and to neglect the actual foundation of moral reality: the histories that make our experience and judgment understandable and intelligible. Insisting on the objective moral facts that *we* think the others are simply missing is not very helpful, because it ignores the difference in cultural history and meaning-constitution altogether. The debate is precisely *about* the historical difference, because there is nothing “underneath” or “beyond” to refer to when explaining different interpretations of meaning. However, insisting on cultural-historical differences should not be misunderstood as the view that we are held *captive* by our moral frameworks. Rather, these frameworks are the background that we start from, as our entry point into a wider discussion about which values apply to all human beings, the nature of objective moral reality as we live it and feel it.

questionableness as one of its essential contents seems to me the only kind that is adequate to the unconditionality of the moral” (1963, 36).

³ See, for example, Peter Railton’s “idealized” agent, who has “complete and vivid knowledge of himself and his environment,” (1996, 142). Closely related is Shafer-Landau’s characterization of the “ideal epistemic judge,” who “will know all moral facts” (2003, 17) and Enoch’s vision of moral agents as being in a position “like that of the scientist who tries to discover the laws of nature” (2015, 199). I have elsewhere argued that because of such claims, the implicit agent behind mainstream moral realism is reifying and alienating with regard to ordinary moral thought and experience (author citation).

Positing objective moral facts to explain the experience that it is really better that women have access to education and work is not to “abstract away” from history, but to talk from *within* our Western history, while also laying bare an imperialist tendency to deny this in the very idea of metaethics as “stepping back” from substantive normative debates and offering a neutral background. This is perhaps the ultimate Western self-complacency. Rather than turning away from our cultural histories, we should ask where such moral clarity comes from, or what it is that generates our moral certainties today. From the perspective of Interpretive Realism, the central metaethical question of what morality “in itself” is, is ultimately a question about the moral ideas we take for granted, and how we have come to embrace them as *objectively* true; here in the West, say, universal human rights, and in Afghanistan, deep religious ideas about the status of women in society. Yet, given its realist ambition, Interpretive Realism does not just stop at the recognition of different histories. If we take the experience of objective value seriously – if we take ourselves seriously – then we cannot avoid the daring question: *Which interpretation is best?* Which culture has captured the most, or has the most complete, or most coherent, or less erroneous answer to the question of which values are superior to others? Which interpretation has come closest to tracking objective reality?

So far, I have been arguing that by starting from contemporary moral beliefs as ready-made givens to posit, for example, that “it is morally wrong to stone gays or rape victims, or to deprive girls of education, or to make voting rights contingent on race” (FitzPatrick 2014, 581), mainstream versions of moral realism tend to ignore the cultural-historical background from which our judgments originate. The mainstream idea, it would seem, is that we simply do not *need* cultural-historical frameworks to understand that rape is always wrong. I argue the exact opposite: without the relevant contexts – things like the women’s rights movement in the 19th century and the feminist movements during the 20th and 21st centuries up to the MeToo movement we see today – we would no longer be able to understand what rape is about. Moreover, the Interpretive Realist argues, once we remind ourselves of our more recent moral concepts (such as “transgressive behavior” and “sexual harassment”) we realize that even more basic moral terms, like “lying” and “theft,” have their own complex histories; that these are not simple *givens*, but at some point in our moral history were first articulated, in response to concrete experiences of violation and abuse that seemed to demand expression and acknowledgment.⁴

This means: against the mainstream idea that it is neither culture nor history which makes it true that rape is wrong, Interpretive Realism makes a point about moral *intelligibility*, as a condition of moral truth. Before we start to talk about truth, objectivity, and reality, about who’s “right” and who’s “wrong,” we have to know what we are talking about – in my central examples: rape, gender discrimination, and sexism. And of course, in the West, we perfectly understand a judgment like “rape is always wrong” because we *have* this history.

The mainstream view, however – that rape was wrong even in a time when the very term “rape” was not part of people’s moral vocabulary, and that, thanks to historical contingencies such as the women’s rights movement we have come to *realize* that objective fact better than our ancestors did – assumes that we do not need to know much about culture and history to understand that rape, gender discrimination, or sexism (etc.) is wrong. We just need to understand “the intrinsic badness of suffering, or the intrinsic worth or dignity of persons” (FitzPatrick 2022, 36). On this account, what makes it true that rape, gender discrimination, and sexism are wrong is the fact that such treatment is a radical assault on the dignity of persons and violates basic human rights. From a hermeneutical viewpoint, this a-historical notion of moral truth is highly problematic. What the mainstream realist fails to acknowledge is the fact that concepts like “rape,” “gender discrimination,” “sexism,” “dignity”

⁴ See Congdon (2023) for a rich and detailed analysis of such moral developments.

and “human rights” are *our* Western concepts: they do not exist outside this historical context, that is, outside the cultural revolutions that led to the modern moral identity. Simply positing that “rape is wrong” because “humans have dignity” as self-evident factual claims is already to assume a lot of background knowledge.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, for example, it is a discussion-stopper to insist on the objective moral facts the Russian people are missing by supporting the war. To *open* the discussion, we need to ask, first, how moral reality – that is, the moral meanings we live by, objective reality as we live it and feel it – is constituted for them (including the false narratives they have been fed by the state-owned media) and how it is constituted for us (which has its own limits and blind spots). While acknowledging our world-making differences does not make normative debates easier, it will make them more transparent. This does not entail relativism because it duly recognizes an objective and noncontextual reality to which our different judgments are answerable. For the Interpretive Realist, then, there is a getting it right and getting it wrong in this domain. Moral judgments are interpretations because they aim to clarify the meaning things have for us, but such clarity cannot be achieved at will by simply articulating this experience. As reality-responsive statements, moral interpretations are accountable to reality, allowing that our experience can be faulty, which implies the deeply realist view that some moral beliefs were wrong (witch hunters, slave traders), while others are so today (war criminals, racists).

Yet there are no fixed limits on our attempts to articulate what is at stake here, which, in the West, involves the invention of moral concepts like “human dignity” and “human rights.” But there may be other interpretations, which can teach us more, and will allow us to see things that we would otherwise have missed. Intriguingly, mainstream realists explicitly refuse to allow such deeper articulation by insisting on brute moral facts. However, if there really is nothing that makes moral judgments true beyond the brute value ladenness of the world, then the sense of identity that our interpretations seek to express seems to evaporate altogether. Taking this position is annihilating our moral self-understanding in its very meaning, closing off the entire space within which our judgments as self-defining orientations can be articulated and discussed.

In this respect, metaphysical skepticism and embarrassment are connected tendencies. It is *because* we are too skeptical about metaphysics, because we see moral *facts* as the only option left for moral realism, that we tend to be embarrassed about how the experience of objective value relates to our self-understanding. Becoming less skeptical about metaphysics and less embarrassed about ourselves are likewise connected. Dispelling the myth of moral facts is exactly what is needed to move forward on both levels. Against this background, Interpretive Realism is not just an attempt to rethink the experience of objective value but to *re-live* it, by liberating ordinary moral judgment from the sense of suspicion and embarrassment that has been surrounding it in mainstream metaethics for too long.

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