

Introduction to Cognitivism

1. **What** is cognitivism?
2. **How** does cognitivism work?
3. **Why** is cognitivism important?

1. **What** is cognitivism?

The field of ethics has three branches: meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics; cognitivism is located in the first and is one of several different meta-ethical beliefs. Write definitions for "meta-ethics" and "cognitivism".

Meta-Ethics

Cognitivism

2. **How** does cognitivism work?

Some cognitivists (e.g. intuitionists and naturalists) claim that ethical statements refer to mind-independent reality so are objectively true or false (which is known as realism). Alternatively, some cognitivists (e.g. ethical subjectivists) claim that ethical statements do not make claims about mind-independent reality but instead make statements about subjective reality (i.e. states of mind); these cognitivists subscribe to anti-realism. Write definitions for "realism" and "anti-realism".

Realism

Anti-Realism

Cognitivism is the meta-ethical belief that ethical statements make claims about reality so are either true or false. For example, the statement, "The Empire State Building is the world's tallest building", declares something about reality, namely, that the distance between the top and bottom of the Empire State Building is greater than the distance between the top and bottom of any other building on Earth. The fact that the statement is false is irrelevant. Cognitivists argue that ethical claims work in much the same way. Make a note about how cognitivism works.

How Cognitivism Works	

3. **Why** is cognitivism important?

Cognitivism is an important meta-ethical position for several reasons, including the fact that it is commonsensical, connected, and consequential. It is particularly influential on normative ethical theories and applied ethics. Make a note of three reasons why cognitivism is important.

Why Cognitivism Is Important	
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